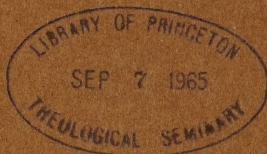


Recent American Synagogue Architecture



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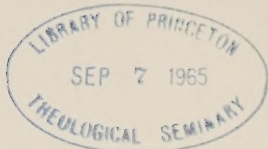


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**Recent American
Synagogue Architecture**

organized by Richard Meier

✓ Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The Jewish Museum

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Preface

In continuing acknowledgment of its special role in the Jewish community, The Jewish Museum has arranged this exhibition of contemporary synagogue architecture for the purpose of bringing to public attention some of the problems raised by the need for reconciling the traditional values accumulated during the history of synagogue building with modern social, economic and architectural needs. The exhibition briefly surveys the past, but its main emphasis has been placed on developments in this country during the past ten years or so. This has been a period of extensive building and rapid advances in the exploration of new formal and esthetic possibilities for a kind of structure which, by contrast with other types of religious buildings, has few clearly defined architectural requirements and no dogmatic rules governing its forms.

In no sense should the exhibition be regarded as an attempt to single out a prize list of select examples. The seventeen buildings shown here were chosen because they illustrate the widest possible variety of solutions arrived at by architects of divergent stylistic persuasions. A number of interesting points emerge from the exhibition. Virtually all of the major American architects have undertaken the building of at least one synagogue. On the one hand, this fact reflects the willingness of congregations to turn freely to the kinds of designers who can provide the most imaginative and inventive solutions. At the same time, these buildings illustrate how sympathetically good contemporary architects can enhance the spirit of tradition and the established ritual requirements without failing to acknowledge the accumulated findings of the past.

In an effort to begin by defining the problems as clearly as possible, we have asked official representatives of the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jewish groups to provide us with statements of their positions regarding the design of the synagogue. We have also asked the architects to discuss the ways in which they approached the theological and esthetic problems confronting them. Their statements are particularly interesting because of the consistency they reveal in the thinking of the architects about the needs of the synagogue, even though their solutions vary so greatly.

The Museum has hoped to accomplish a number of things with this exhibition. Our primary purpose has been to try to acquaint the lay public, both those with a general interest in the matter and those serving on congregation building committees, with the ways in which the synagogue structure can be approached in the modern world. With this in mind, the catalog has been prepared so that it might serve as a kind of handbook of contemporary synagogue architecture for the use of those concerned with the problem. While a number of excellent books have been published in the recent past on the subject, the exhibition comes down to the present moment, and beyond, since a number of the structures are incomplete, or still in the planning stage.

We would like to acknowledge our grateful thanks to the large group of people whose cooperation is necessary to such an undertaking. These include, first, the architects and their staffs, who have supplied us with much of the material of the exhibition, and, most important of all, the congregations which have commissioned the architects to build their synagogues. These names are listed below in the body of the catalog.

Special thanks are due to those who generously wrote for the catalog, including: Rabbi Raphael Posner, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Rabbi Seymour Siegel, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig, Yeshiva University; Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Dr. Avram Kampf, Montclair State College, Montclair, N. J.

Mrs. Rachel Wischnitzer has been kind enough to allow us to reproduce photographs from her book, "Synagogue Architecture in the United States." (Reproduced in the exhibition only.) We are especially obliged to Mrs. Louise Mendelsohn, Eric Mendelsohn's widow, for her cooperation in assembling a great many photographs of his work. The Director would also like to express his thanks to Richard Meier, whose enthusiasm for the project has combined with his knowledge and skill as an architect, so that the largest share of credit for the exhibition goes to him.

Alan R. Solomon, Director



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Introduction

The present exhibition of "Recent American Synagogue Architecture" has been undertaken because of the general awareness of the need to examine the problem of the contemporary synagogue. One of the key issues in modern architecture has been the development of new forms to replace those abandoned in the process of evolution away from the styles of the past. The new technology and the stylistic freedom which prevails have opened up almost unlimited opportunities for the architect, with the result that the range of possibilities has in a sense impeded the formulation of fixed types of buildings for particular uses. In most cases, a combination of functional and esthetic considerations has produced satisfactory solutions, but the religious building, with its special requirements, has perhaps more than any other kind of structure posed serious difficulties for the architect in search of significant forms.

The simple purpose of this exhibition has been to ask a fundamental question: What is the synagogue, and in what architectural idiom can it be stated in the modern world? Architects have faced the problem of designing a synagogue in a variety of ways, and the examples shown have been chosen both because of their high quality and because they illustrate various points of view. In every case, the architects have kept clearly in mind the basic concept and the basic needs of the synagogue. In no sense has this exhibition been an attempt to make a definitive or comprehensive study of the architecture of the synagogue in America today; instead, we have tried to demonstrate the existence of a fascinating and pervasive process, that is, the emergence in contemporary America of a new spirit in religious architecture, the final definition of which lies somewhere in the future.

Both through his talent and his enthusiasm, as these have been stated in his buildings and his writings, the architect Eric Mendelsohn has been a major force in altering the course of synagogue architecture. As he put it in 1947, it is a question of the change from the position of the past, when "...the architectural expression which an architecturally uncreative century borrowed from the pattern-book of past history, building churches (and synagogues) as imitations of Greek temples, Medieval chapels and Renaissance domes..." must give way to a new position, in which we are "...aware that churches and temples are built to last for many generations to come, and they, rightfully, will condemn us when our plans are obsolete, when our buildings reflect the form-conceptions of a world that is not theirs. Their world demands new documents, centers of worship where the spirit of the Bible, the New Testament, and the Koran is not an ancient mirage but a living truth, an unmistakable part of a life that is ours."

That Jews have historically built synagogues in the style dominant in their time is an undisputed fact. In America, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this meant, almost without exception, taking the forms of the Greek temple, the Moorish mosque, the Gothic cathedral, the Romanesque church, or the Colonial American church. Even in instances where reference has been made to previous Jewish forms, the results have been unsuitable. It is not necessary to point out that a wooden synagogue built in New York today in an Eastern European style, similar to the marvelous Polish buildings of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, like those at Wolpa, Grodno and Zabłudów, would be wholly inappropriate to the place,

the cultural environment; and the available funds and technical resources.

None of the buildings exhibited here in drawings, photographs and models were intended to exploit historical sentimentalism dependent on tangible reminders of the past. They all have a number of significant elements in common: They all express a viable continuity with the time in which they have been designed. They all have historical antecedents in common, like the House of Study, the House of Prayer, and the House of Community. Their character and spirit is determined by the way in which the most important architectural fundamentals have been handled, that is, the way space has been manipulated and the way light has been controlled. They are all concerned with the accommodation of the traditional requirements of the synagogue, which have to do with the relationships of the functional elements to each other. These include the placement of the ark, bimah, and congregation, the atmosphere created by this disposition, and the symbolic forms which evoke and reinforce that atmosphere. The buildings are all modern to the extent that they conform to contemporary means and attitudes. Each uses contemporary materials, methods of construction, attitudes toward structural integrity, the use of the site and the expressive potential of these elements. They are redefining and, in some cases, helping to establish the form of the modern synagogue.

In order to meet the requirements of the problem of designing a synagogue, then, architects concern themselves with space, light, the hierarchy of functional relationships, and the order of a visual solution. Frank Lloyd Wright wrote that "the solution to every problem is contained within itself. Its plan, form, and character are determined by the nature of the site, the nature of the materials used, the nature of the system using them, the nature of the life concerned and the purpose of the building itself. And always a qualifying factor is the nature of the architect himself."

The best synagogues are the purest architecture, the most straightforward expressions of what the synagogue should be. Among the least successful ones are those which depend on symbolism in determining the plan of the structure. This is true, not because there is anything inherently wrong in the use of symbols, but because the use of visual symbols in this way falsifies the form, since the space must be compromised in solving the symbolic visual problem. The value of the visual symbol is lost because the congregation of the synagogue is inside the space and unable to see the external form. Such symbolic forms can only 'read' from above the structure, that is, in plan, and this has very little to do with the function, the space, and the light within. Verbal and visual symbols in architecture are falsifications and symbolism in the synagogue plan is illicit. Symbolism can operate in architecture only if it is subjugated to the basic problems of the architecture. It should be understood that this injunction does not apply to the ritual objects and the furnishings of the building, where symbolism of course finds its proper place. However, extraordinary and lavish furnishings are only pertinent when the building fails as a work of architecture and requires them to hide its weaknesses. (This exhibition is not concerned with furnishings; they will be the subject of a later exhibition at The Jewish Museum.)

In the design by Louis I. Kahn for Mikveh Israel Synagogue, in Philadelphia, the form concept comes from Mr. Kahn's idea of what the most important consideration should be in his building. He has written that "A space can never reach its place in archi-

texture without natural light. Artificial light is the light of night expressed in positioned chandeliers, not to be compared with the unpredictable play of natural light.... Architecture deals with spaces, the thoughtful and meaningful making of spaces. The architectural space is one where the structure is apparent in the space itself. A long span is a great effort that should not be dissipated by division within it. The art of architecture has wonderful examples of spaces within spaces, but without deception. A wall dividing a domed space would negate the entire spirit of the dome. The structure is a design in light. The vault, the dome, the arch, the column are structures related to the character of light. Natural light gives mood by space, by the nuances of light in the time of day and the seasons of the year as it enters and modifies the space...."¹

Louis Kahn's building is an exciting and meaningful solution to the problem of the synagogue. Not only is Kahn an architect of major stature, but he also understands religion, the idea of God and the liturgy. His philosophic sense of the problem and his architectural sense of space rising above the congregation are magnificent. As in the Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam, 1675, and Arnold Brunner's design for the Shearith Israel Synagogue, built in New York City in 1897, Kahn's interior arrangement follows Orthodox custom. In these buildings the carrying of the Torah from the ark to the reader is emphasized.

In Kahn's Mikveh Israel, as well as in Werner Seligmann's Beth David, and Congregation Sons of Israel, by Davis, Brody and Wisniewski, the bimah, the platform in the house of worship from which the Torah is read and interpreted, and from which services are conducted, is placed in the center of the sanctuary space, with the seats arranged along the side walls. (In other solutions architects have used an auditorium plan, with the bimah placed in front of the ark. The seats are then arranged to face the ark.) In Barnett Newman's the bimah is replaced by a mound, but that is also in the center of the sanctuary space.

This arrangement brings up an interesting problem about the basic disposition of the synagogue interior. Theologians have expressed differing viewpoints on the relationship between worship and study in the synagogue. The theological problem bears upon the question of whether a synagogue should be primarily a house of worship or a house of study, or whether study and worship are synonymous. However, it also becomes an architectural problem when a new synagogue is being designed.

As Philip Johnson points out, one of the most difficult problems which exists uniquely in relation to the design of the synagogue, is the double use of the sanctuary, a problem which perhaps cannot be completely answered by the architect. Buildings have been designed which have attempted to combine classrooms and the sanctuary, a social hall and the sanctuary, or a lobby, social hall and the sanctuary, in order to increase the seating capacity for the High Holy Days. This problem of an expanding and a contracting space is evident in many of the buildings in this exhibition. Those architects who have not had this problem, but instead have been given a single space to design, have usually created a more satisfactory structure. We have already seen how the ancient central plan has been revived in a few cases. This arrangement, which clearly provides a better architectural solution, does not provide for expansion of the seating space. For this reason, most contemporary Reform and Conservative

synagogues have turned to other solutions.

In reference to this problem, Dr. Eugene Mihaly has said in "The Implications of the Jewish Concept of Prayer for Synagogue Architecture":

"If the Ark is seen in its profounder symbolic meaning as representing the centrality of the Law, the written tradition, and the Bimah as the symbolic representation of the importance of the congregation in study, in its role as interpreter and in prayer, we may glimpse the essential polarity to which the very arrangement of the synagogue interior was witness.

"It is striking that during the centuries when the written law, be it the Bible, Talmud or Codes, was viewed with stringent finality, when pitifully little was left to the creative interpreter and accordingly we should expect the Ark to be the focal point, during this very period it is rather the Bimah or, in other words, the congregation that is given greatest prominence. When environmental pressures were most conducive toward the deification of the tablets and the scroll, the opposite polar extreme was stressed to maintain the tension which is the very heart of Judaism.

"It is doubtful whether the return to a Bimah in the center is the most effective device that contemporary architectural skill can devise as a balance to the Ark. The return to a solution which was an outgrowth of a total apperception radically different from our own is rarely successful. It is a pat and facile answer which most often succeeds only in diverting our serious attention from the real dimensions of the problem.

"Yet whatever the effective solution, Judaism would ask the architect: 'Do not design the Ark so that the congregation is overwhelmed by it. Essentially, the Torah is not in it. Curb the apparently irresistible temptation to idolize the tablets. Be aware of the tension—an Ark, yes—but not an idol' . . . "architectural design cannot, by itself, correct a situation encouraged by liturgy and other significant factors in Jewish life."

The problem of the synagogue architect is to express in a physical structure the spirit of the Jewish congregation.

There is no adequate physical statement of the reality of God. But the most articulate concepts of the synagogue are those which are true to this reality and true to architecture. To sum up, these concepts have to do, as we have seen, with light, space and the hierarchical arrangement of values in the synagogue. Space has to do with the order and enclosure of the hierarchy of value (the bimah, the ark, and the disposition of the congregation in the space). Light has to do with mood. Anything more than this is a sublimation which may support, but not substitute for, this hierarchy. To emphasize symbolic devices in the plan of the building is to attach a false theological importance to their presence at the expense of the architecture. The symbolic function should be limited properly to the ritual objects and the furnishings.

There is a difference between an expert synagogue maker and an architect. That difference is similar to the distinction between a portrait painter and an artist. One is concerned with producing a commercial product and the other with manifesting an idea. The synagogue must be the expression of an idea; it must represent the appropriate synthesis of structured space and meanings which mark true architecture.

Richard Meier

The Synagogue¹

It is customary to speak about the synagogue as fulfilling a triple function, that of a House of Prayer, a House of Study and a House of Assembly. While this has been its threefold role throughout most of its history, the definition is incomplete, for it fails to get at the heart and enduring essence of this institution, and at its revolutionary nature.

The synagogue, unlike the First and Second Temple of Jerusalem is not a "House of God" where the Deity dwells, although it was called Mikdash Me'at (small sanctuary) and is often viewed as a substitute for the ancient Temple. Its sanctity does not derive from its location or from its structure or from its furnishings. It rests in the worshiping congregation, in the community of believers. In the Temple, God dwelled in the innermost part, inaccessible directly even to the priest, who approached Him by the medium of sacrifice in behalf of the people. In the synagogue "God stands in the midst of the congregation," in the heart of man which has become the "Temple of the Lord."

This change represents an altogether different and higher stage of religious awareness. The Temple was the house of the Lord; the synagogue is the house of its congregants. No longer is God conceived as dwelling in a particular place. He is everywhere and nowhere. He can be addressed from every corner of the world, by every man who reaches out to Him.

Prayer, which had been part of the sacrificial act in the Temple, emancipated itself in the synagogue and was joined by instruction and discussion. The magical elements contained in sacrifice and the unconditional submission to God through the mediation of the priest were abandoned and gave way to symbolic rituals and the rational elements of study and discourse. To the fore now came the individual member of the congregation, to stand in a direct relationship toward his maker, and to become an active participant in the service.

The change was enormous. Those who up to now had been at best distant observers, watching the God-appointed priest perform rites and read from the Torah (the Law) which they did not understand, became actively engaged in the service. Every participant assumed a degree of responsibility for the service and might even be called upon to lead it or to read from the Torah.

The word "synagogue" comes from the Greek *sinago*, to gather; in Hebrew *Beth Knesseth*, House of Gathering, of Assembly. The origin of the institution is not quite clear, however, and is still a matter of scholarly controversy. Some scholars tend to place the origin of the synagogue in the period of the Babylonian exile (586–538 B. C. E.) when Jews, deprived of their Temple and unable to bring sacrifices, gathered with their elders on the Sabbath to discuss their communal affairs, to read from their book of law, and to worship together.²

It is, however, quite plausible to assume, with Leopold Loew, that the origin of the institution goes farther back, and that it was not erected "in the area of culture but on the ground of the political life of the community."³ Loew assumed that the city gates referred to so often in the Bible were the center of communal life, as were the town halls and courthouses of later days. The city gates were market places where country folk and artisans brought their wares, where prophets spoke their words, and where on certain days of the week judges sat in court. As cities grew and municipal affairs became more complex, and as important documents began to gather in the archives, a municipal structure was erected, a *Beth Am* (People's House) of which the Bible speaks (Jeremiah 39, 8).

An interesting passage in the Talmud points to the connection between the early

Beth Am and the synagogue, which Loew believed to have evolved from it. "Rabbi Ishmael Ben Eliezer said: On account of two sins Ame Ha'arez (the unlearned) will die: Because they call the holy ark a chest, and because they call the synagogue, Beth Am (People's House)" (B. Shabbat 32a). Since the institution of the synagogue (Beth Kneseth) is mentioned nowhere in the Bible, one might assume that this Talmudic passage indicates a connection between the synagogue and the earlier, secular Beth Am. The chest, Loew assumed, was the depository of important individual and communal documents.⁴

The contemporary historian Salo Baron deepens and broadens Loew's view. He sees a cluster of forces active in ancient Israel which, in their interdependence, created a set of psycho-social attitudes and institutional forms that made it possible for Jews in other countries to survive as an ethnic religious group around their synagogues.

The geographic heterogeneity of the land of Israel, the economic self-sufficiency of the ancient Israeli towns, the weakness of central government agencies, the strong autonomous municipal administration, the local self-government by representative elders, all these fostered an early sense of self-reliance and self-rule among the Jews. Early pre-exilic voluntary and forced dispersion brought about an adaptation of native forms to foreign conditions. The Deuteronomic revolution (621 B. C. E.) brought about a centralization of sacrificial worship at the Temple of Jerusalem by abolishing local cult areas, stimulated new forms of communal worship based on prayer, recitation of communal lore, liturgical song, and the sermon. The interplay of all these elements helped to evolve the synagogue as an easily adaptable and portable institution, which ultimately any ten Jewish men could establish anywhere in the world. This institution, in turn, became the center of the ethnic religious unity of the Jewish people and made possible their survival in many different lands.⁵

There was, as we have seen, a deep democratic impulse within the synagogue institution from its very inception. It persisted throughout the ages and led of necessity to a wide diffusion of knowledge. The mode of worship itself, the reading from the Law and its interpretation, the prayer interwoven with instruction and narration of historical events, became important factors in the education of the congregants.

The synagogue spread wherever a Jewish group established itself. With the destruction of the second Temple (70 C. E.) its importance increased enormously. It became the natural focal point of Jewish communal life. The regularity with which the prayers took place endowed life with sanctity and brought about a great measure of inwardness. The regularity of daily prayer also created an attitude within the individual which persisted even when he departed from his community. It made him the carrier of a tradition, a way of life, the bearer of a destiny and a historical consciousness which he was able to transmit under the most difficult circumstances.

Out of the synagogue evolved the Mosque and the Christian Church, and on its model American Puritans consciously shaped their meeting houses. In the course of its history it became the natural center of Jewish communal life. In the ancient world it had already contained a school for the education of the children and of adults. Its secular activities often overshadowed religious ones. Often it possessed rooms where the passing stranger could spend a night. Within its premises the affairs of the community were discussed, slaves were liberated, circumcision and marriages performed. In larger synagogues, like the one in Alexandria, guilds had their specially assigned seats, so that the stranger who came to town could easily make contact with fellow craftsmen. Court was often held in the synagogue, losses proclaimed, and in the Middle Ages there existed that remarkable institution called "Delay of Prayer."

Anyone who felt that he was wronged could delay the start of the communal prayer, to appeal to public opinion in order to gain his right.

However distant its beginning, the roots of the synagogue are planted deeply in the communal and religious history of the Jewish people. Today it is their most original creation, the mainstay of their cohesiveness, assuring the survival of their group, their cultural identity, and their historical consciousness. It answers their social, religious, communal, and educational needs. Philo, speaking about synagogues in the first century, put it thus: "What are they but schools of wisdom, and temperance, and justice and piety and holyness and even virtue, by which human and divine things are appreciated and placed upon a proper footing."¹⁶

Dr. Abraham Kampf

¹Excerpted from the forthcoming book "Contemporary Synagogue Art" by Dr. Abraham Kampf.

²Cf. H. Graetz, "History of the Jews" (Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1891), p. 401. S. Dubnow, "Welt Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes" (Berlin, 1925), p. 335. Samuel Krauss, "Synagogale Altertümer" (Wien, 1922), pp. 52-66.

³Ludwig Loew, "Der Synagogale Ritus" (Soegedin, 1889), p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 3. Loew also points out that Targum and Rashi interpret the Hebrew Beth Am as Beth Knesseth.

⁵S. W. Baron, "The Jewish Community," Vol. 1, Chapter III, pp. 87-93; "A Social and Religious History of the Jews," Vol. 1, Chapter IV, pp. 280-286. Fairly recently two scholars again delved into the origin of the synagogues. Louis Finkelstein, "The Origin of the Synagogue" (Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, N. Y., 1928-30) puts its origin far back into Biblical times but sees the religious assemblies of the Prophet as the origin of the synagogue. Schlomoh Zeitlin, "The Origin of the Synagogue" (Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, N. Y. 1930-31), agrees with Loew as to the secular origin of the synagogue. However, he puts the time of its appearance into the period after the return of the Babylonian exile.

⁶Philo, "Life of Mose." Translation by C. D. Young (London), Vol. III, p. 27.

The Synagogue in Jewish Law

Jewish law is rich in references to the synagogue—how it is to be oriented, how constructed, how used. It is noteworthy, however, that in almost all cases, the law is subject to more than one interpretation.

The earliest references to the synagogue in Halachic literature are to be found in the Tosefta. One, cited by the RIF (Isaac Ben Jacob Alfasi, a Talmudist of the 11th century) in the first chapter of Baba Bathra #624, rules that townsmen can force each other to build a synagogue if there is need for one. This law is codified in Maimonides, Yad, Laws of Prayer, Ch. 11, and in the Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim #150. Another Tosefta, Megilla #3.23 (ed. Lieberman, p. 360) rules that the synagogue should be built on the highest point in the town and in Tractate Shabbat 11a, Rab (one of the sages of the Talmud) is quoted as saying that “any city whose gardens are higher than the synagogue will ultimately be destroyed.” This statement is taken as meaning that the synagogue should be the highest building in the city. However, in the later codes (Orach Chaim, 150:2 and others) this ruling is qualified and in “difficult” situations—an example would be when the Jews are in a minority—is completely withdrawn.

In the same tractate of Tosefta we are told that the door of a synagogue should be in its eastern wall as was the case in the Sanctuary. Later codifiers (see Tur; Orach Chaim #150) interpreted this as applying specifically to those synagogues to the East of Israel in which case the ark with the Torah scrolls would be on the Western wall; in all other cases the ruling is that the door into the synagogues should be in the wall opposite that where the Torah ark is placed. This ruling applies to the doors which lead directly into the synagogue where the actual services are held. Those leading into the foyer of the synagogue may be in any direction.

In the Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 30a, we are told that a person should pray (in the context it refers specifically to the Amidah, the silent prayer of the 18 benedictions) facing towards the land of Israel; if he is in Israel he should face Jerusalem; if in Jerusalem he should face the site of the Temple. This ruling is based on a run of verses in I Kings, Ch. 8. However, we are also told there that when it is inconvenient, a person should “direct his heart” toward the Temple; we are further told that a blind man or one who is unable to ascertain the correct direction should “direct his heart to his Father in heaven.”

In the later codes these sources were taken to mean that a synagogue should, whenever possible, face towards the Land of Israel; in occidental countries, the East. This means that the ark of the Torah scrolls should be placed on the Eastern wall (see Orach Chaim 94:1). However cognizance is taken of those synagogues where the ark is not on the eastern wall and in those cases the majority opinion is that one should pray towards the ark rather than the East.

A synagogue should have windows facing towards Jerusalem (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 34b) (Rashi, ad locum, in order to be able to see the sky and achieve a suitable frame of mind for prayer) codified in the Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer, Ch. 5 (Orach Chaim 90:4). The Zohar, Parshat Pikudei, rules that there should be 12 windows, symbolic, perhaps, of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The alememar, the reader's platform, should be in the center of the synagogue and raised (Orach Chaim 150:5; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer, Ch. 11) in order that the congregation should be able to hear the reader clearly. However, for the “Silent Prayer” the reader should descend to floor level. (Tur, Orach Chaim 150). In Orach Chaim 90:1 the ruling is given that, in order to make himself heard

more clearly, the reader may remain on an elevated platform even for the “Silent Prayer.”

The alememmar should have no more than six steps leading up to it (Orach Chaim 150:5; Magen Abraham's citation of Zohar, Parshat Vayakhel).

For the ruling that the alememmar should be in the center of the synagogue Maimonides seems to be the primary source, and the reason given there is so that the congregation should be able to hear clearly. Later codifiers ruled that those sitting between the alememmar and the Torah ark should not face the alememmar, since if they so do they will be turning their backs to the Torah, which is hardly fitting. There seems to be no real reason against having the alememmar in the front of the synagogue, directly in front of the ark, but many of the 19th and 20th century codifiers forbid it, apparently as a reaction against reform practice. (See Beur Halacha, Orach Chaim 150:5.)

If possible there should not be a dwelling place above the synagogue. If there is one it should be clean and not used in a “despicable way” (Orach Chaim 151:12). One may not sleep, eat or drink in a synagogue (there are exceptions to this rule) and no business may be transacted there. One may not use the synagogue as a “short cut”—that is one may not walk through it simply to facilitate progress from place to place—(Orach Chaim 151). Maimonides (Yad, Laws of Prayer, Ch. 11) gives an order for the seating arrangements and is followed in it by most codifiers. The “elders,” he writes, “should sit in front facing the rest of the congregation.” The Lebush (a commentator of the 16th century), however, rules that nowadays since people “buy” their synagogue seats this ruling no longer applies (See Magen David; Orach Chaim 150:5).

Rabbi Raphael Posner

Statements by Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Rabbis on the Architecture of the Synagogue

An Orthodox Point of View

The traditional synagogue, as maintained by orthodox Jews, is one that is a Mikdash Me'at, a miniature sanctuary. Hence its every aspect must be that of Kedushah, sanctification. In design it recognizes separate seating for the sexes, for such was the mode in the ancient Jerusalem Temple. Architecturally, there may be a gallery for the women or separate rows marked by a divisional fencing or balustrade.

Traditional orthodox synagogues are always built with the Ark of the Law, Aron ha-Kodesh, containing the Torah scrolls in the East portion of the hall. This ark is always covered with a parochet, curtain, even as in the ancient Temple there was such a curtain for the Holy of Holies. Above the ark there is always an "Eternal Light" burning.

Usually the ark is on a higher platform above the customary seating. This is the dukan from which the Kohanim give their priestly benediction.

Immediately below there is the tevah or amud or Readers' Desk, from which the reader or cantor recites the prayer, leading the congregation.

On the dukan too there is set also a stand for the Rabbi, facing the congregation to deliver his discourses.

The traditional synagogue usually has in the middle of the hall a bimah or platform from which the Torah is read. This is centered, according to tradition, so that all may watch and listen to the Torah reading. In Sephardic congregations, this bimah is more to the back of the synagogue, leaving the space between it and the dukan vacant as admot kodesh, sacred ground, facing the ark.

In many a synagogue there is also a laver or washing stand at the entrance for the purification of the hands, allowing for entrance to prayer with a spirit of sanctification and devotion.

Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig, Yeshiva University

A Conservative Point of View

The idea that it was possible to worship God without animal sacrifice or priesthood was first formulated in Judaism. It has been called "the greatest practical achievement of the Jews in all their history" (Herford).

Synagogue, the name most commonly used in the West to designate the Jewish house of God is derived from a Greek word meaning assembly (Aramaic, kenishta). The synagogue is the place where Jews assemble.

They assemble primarily—though not exclusively—to worship God. The word also indicates that what is important is the community of Israel, through which the individual approaches his Creator.

From a technical point of view all that is required for a structure to have the status of a synagogue is that it be a place where at least ten Jews regularly assemble for worship. There are some prescriptions of architectural details—though these were never consistently followed. The building should be the highest one in the city; there should be windows; there should be an ark containing the Torah scrolls; there should be a platform in the center of the synagogue (Ashkenazic, bimah, or Sephardic, alememar) from which the Torah is read; a separate section for the women; a reminder of the Eternal Light which burned in the Temple.

Even these few details were frequently overlooked. It was difficult to build the synagogue on the highest place in the town. The windows, which in the words of an ancient commentator were to help the worshipper "direct his heart looking toward heaven and thus humbling his heart," were not always possible. Even the Torah ark is not indispensable. In reform congregations and in most conservative congregations the bimah is combined with the ark platform and family pews take the place of the separate women's section. One of the authorities of the nineteenth century wrote: "There is no particular form ordained for the synagogue building."

Yet, there was also a yearning to beautify the House of God; to worship Him in the beauty of holiness. The ancient texts taught that the Shechina, the Indwelling Presence of the Almighty, dwelt in the synagogue. The appearance and atmosphere of the House of Prayer should reflect this important fact. The external form of the building was subordinated to the internal quality. Outwardly the synagogue might be undistinguished. But inside there was beauty, reverence, and warmth. Resources were limited; energies were circumscribed. If outward beauty did not reflect piety, nor stimulate it, then it was wasteful. The house of God should inspire the worshippers to lift their eyes and hearts to Heaven. This was the primary criterion. Nor was it forgotten that in a synagogue it is the community that prays together. The community acting together addresses its God. They are not a group of spectators watching the unfolding of a mystery. Therefore, there was to be light in the synagogue. The worshippers—all on equal plane—were to join together in bringing their prayers before the Heavenly Throne.

The synagogue building was to reflect multiple functions which were to be filled. Primary was the instruction in the Torah. In many European languages the synagogue is called shool which is, of course, school. The instruction was first of all part of the service, and the reading from the Torah scrolls was the central act of the service, and the ark in which the scrolls were placed was the central point of the synagogue building. But instruction in the law and lore of Judaism was to take place at all times for both young and old. Other communal activities such as meetings, celebrations, lectures, and even a kind of employment bureau were part of the synagogue's function. The building had to reflect these multiple functions. American Jewry has embraced the idea of the multiple function of the synagogue structure and has developed it beyond the conceptions of previous generations. There is, however, a distressing tendency in contemporary synagogues to conceive of the worship service as a performance being carried on by the rabbi and the cantor, instead of a communal experience where all together worship the Creator, the God of Israel. It is hoped that this tendency will be reversed.

Jews, like all people, have admired beauty. They realized that the Almighty can be worshipped through the creation and enjoyment of objects of beauty. But any idea of beauty for its own sake was foreign to the Jewish spirit. Beauty, like other activities of the human soul, should be a ladder by means of which all creatures approach the Source of All Beauty and Holiness.

Rabbi Seymour Siegel, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

A Reform Point of View

The resurgence of the synagogue in the life of American Jewry, which we have witnessed in the decades since the close of World War II, brought with it a sense

of dissatisfaction with the so-called historical styles in which the American synagogue building had been designed. To many, the architectural patterns were those of another century and another clime. In addition, they failed to take into account the dynamic changes in the function and role of the synagogue.

A building styled after a Greek temple, a Byzantine mosque, a Gothic cathedral or a Colonial church were unfitting models for the contemporary synagogue. While there has never been an accepted form of architecture identified with the synagogue, it has always tended to take on the blending of the community, the era and the society in which it developed. Thus it is appropriate that architects in America have attempted to make the contemporary synagogue building an authentic expression of our time and of our own community. The Reform Jewish movement in America has vigorously supported a program to encourage the creation of an authentic and indigenous form of architectural design for the American synagogue building and at the same time jealously guarded against the abandonment of the sacred symbols of the past that have meaning and beauty for the generation of Jews in our time. The essence of our efforts is captured in the words of one of the foremost American architects, Pietro Belluschi, who wrote:

"Religion and art are both a search for truth, which is forever eluding, forever challenging, never fully possessed, only intuitively felt, and the very essence of God's mystery. The fruits of this continuous search, when made in earnest and not by repeating worn out formulas, carry the deepest and the most desirable meaning through the ages."

Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Statements by Architects on the Architecture of the Synagogue

Pietro Belluschi

In America, the synagogue is developing into a complex institution where the multiple manifestations of Judaism can take place in warmth and freedom. There is no architectural tradition to match the Jewish faith. Architects can contribute to a trend by creating spaces which serve their purpose with clarity and nobility. By emphasizing the special nature of simple materials such as wood and brick, they may achieve beauty without ostentation and with economy of means. The architecture of the synagogue should be an eloquent expression of the spirit of man.

Peter Blake & Julian Neski

The essential expressive element, the Sanctuary-Social Hall roof, is handled as a vigorous plastic form suspended over a broad and neutral base. We thought of this form as an historic derivation of the ancient Sanctuary-Tent. The shape is dominant, pierced with light, and finished in rich, darkly stained wood. Eventually, the Eternal Light will be visible in the end window facing the public approach.

The base element, rectangular and pierced with courts, contains all the necessary program spaces, including classrooms, offices, entrance-lounge, library, and all other rooms related to the Sanctuary-Social Hall.

In general, we attempted to exploit to the maximum the tension developed between the base and roof elements. The result we feel gives precedence to what we thought was essential—the religious use of the structure.

Marcel Breuer

A place of worship, simple as it may be, serviceable as it need be, is—or should be—different from a mere place of assembly. Something is happening there which is more than just existence, more than just a social event. An idea is there, an attitude toward faith, an attempt to solve life's problems. Should one consider a church, a temple (as small or confined as it may be) a part of infinite space? May we hope that its geometry could be a part of cosmic geometry? Will the planes of its structure point toward distance without end?

Modest as it may be, a place of worship seems to demand dignity and serenity as its birth-right. It is part of its function to reach beyond function. Its destiny seems to be to express in static material—stone, concrete, glass—man's drive towards the spiritual. The inanimate structure reflects the vibrations of his thoughts, of his emotions, of his beliefs. The sober science of building and engineering has to achieve more than a routine solution: the routine solution has to receive demonstrative and symbolic dimensions....

Davis, Brody and Wisniewski

Although there is no historical tradition of synagogue design, there are some strong traditions of worship and ritual. Traditionally, the synagogue is different from other places of worship in that it is basically a gathering place for laymen; priests are not required. The most important aspect of the service is the reading and studying of the Torah.

We have, therefore, striven to express architecturally this unit of ritual and congregation by designing spaces which have a central orientation, developing from the circle, the square, the octagon, rather than the rectangle.

Our aim has been to emphasize the centrality and gathering of the congregation under one roof for worship in contrast to the usual axially directed space which sets up an audience to stage relationship.

Harold Edelman and Stanley Salzman

The precedents of the Eastern European synagogues at the height of their style were kept in mind when designing the Sinai Reform Temple. Synagogues had the following characteristics:

The bimah changed from a speaker's platform to a preacher's rostrum from which the Divine Word was spoken. It was centrally located, raised several steps and covered with a canopy. The building was formed to make the bimah an organic part, and the most important part, of the whole; four pillars defined it and the roof over it was often raised.

The outside was high, but modest, the main emphasis being on an interior space of visual richness, often covered with Biblical motifs as well as representations of animals and plants. The buildings were often bold and original in form and construction, with emphasis on strong structural solutions to special problems. The structure was always demonstrated visually, and decoration and forced perspective were used to emphasize height. In the 18th century vaulting was hung from trusses to symbolize a tent.

Interiors were designed to evoke a religious emotionalism, not only through the use of rich decoration, but by demonstrating structural elements of walls, vaults and trusses.

Materials and methods of construction related to those common for other buildings in the area.

Since the congregation of any American temple is far from intimately related, in the old sense, to the Talmudic teachings, it seemed desirable to emphasize in the building itself the traditional religious emotionalism more obviously than in those of the past. Our use of the Star of David for the Sanctuary plan is not only symbolic, but brings each seat in the Sanctuary and Expansion physically close to the bimah, the ark and the rabbi. The Star is also meant to suggest the carpet set in the tent, symbolic of the first synagogue. We also wished to express the continuity of the Jewish people by continuing the use of traditional synagogue characteristics: the height over the bimah, the relationship of total form to bimah, the richness of interior surfacing, the exposed structure.

The relationship of the sanctuary tent to the total form of the building is also meant to express a particularly Jewish problem, the expansion of seating necessary on the High Holy Days. The clear expression of this problem in the total form results in a religious building that could only be Jewish.

Geddes, Brecher, Qualls and Cunningham

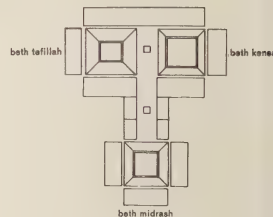
Synagogue architecture, like all architecture, is the spatial expression of human conduct. The synagogue of today has a sense of continuity with older synagogues, but it has a direct connection with contemporary life. The complexity of life is reflected in the synagogue: it is not one activity but many activities, it contains not one space but many spaces.

The act of worship is both study and prayer. The synagogue does not have a single sanctuary but many "houses": House of Study, House of Prayer, and House of Community.

The plan for Temple Beth Shalom, Manchester, Connecticut, is based upon three main halls, around which are clustered many smaller rooms and alcoves. The three main halls are called:

- Beth Midrash—House of Study
- Beth Tefillah—House of Prayer
- Beth Keneset—House of Community

The main halls are high, top-lighted, canopy-like spaces, supported by four free-standing columns. The columns define the seating areas. The halls provide for 75 seats in small services, for 250 seats in larger services, and for 550 seats during the high holidays. Classrooms and dual-purpose alcoves provide for 13 classes.



Percival Goodman

When I first designed a synagogue it was with no early preparation in our faith. It was not synagogue attendance, not the religious atmosphere of a home, but the Nazi atrocity plus readings in Martin Buber which turned my feeling of vague yearning into a need for a concrete expression of kinship. I was then told I romanticized my Jewish heritage because, even though a New Yorker, I had little relationship with professing Jews. I was told that I read Bible and Talmud and thought our people were like that, they weren't, perhaps never were and surely today, they didn't want to be. Well! Some twelve years of experience with synagogue leaders convinces me that they are not the dedicated and ethical priesthood I had believed, but, I am equally convinced they want to be.

Here let me celebrate these people who start without a deep conviction, who in the process of a utilitarian task of money raising and building become dreamers. These doctors, housewives, lawyers, business men, who often enough start out as unwilling recruits or status seekers and end up as dedicated temple builders. These people who on the day of dedication understand Solomon's prayer: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less the house I have built."

Many synagogues, designed from Florida to Colorado to New England, make me, I suppose, an expert. The conditions motivating the designs are these:

Tradition

We Jews have no tradition of building, but we have a tradition on which synagogue buildings can be based—the service and the congregation. In every building I have designed, it is the way in which the service is carried out which established the whole tone and feeling of the building. And, may I say that I don't listen passively to the generalities of the committee in finding this tone, but search for myself and find it often where none thought it existed.

Expression

In design and structure, the work must be of our time. The architect uses the best skills, the most advanced engineering knowledge available. Only the best used in the best way is worthy of God. There can be no question of "modern" or "period" styles. The building cannot be an imitation of some past way, for an imitation cannot be as good as the original. Our modern construction ways are what they are, have their own expressive vocabulary, and must be used.

If God created in his Own image then man fulfills his godliness insofar as he is creative. To create means to make a new thing, a thing not seen on this earth before "Sing," as the psalm says, "a new song unto the Lord."

The Service

The people must gather together in the greatest possible intimacy so the prayer arises as if from a single throat. The room is as small as is conveniently possible, the people as close to the bimah as can be. The room is well, even brightly, lit so the worshippers may see each other clearly as well as easily read their books.

The test of a religious service is whether the congregation is participant or merely onlooker. It would appear that the generally required auditorium plan is inferior to the traditional plan and so (with little success) I recommend the latter, for in one case the congregants face a raised platform whose major element and main embellishment is the ark and the congregants are usually passive onlookers, while in the traditional plan there is a central platform to which reading and prayers are directed and the congregation is essentially face to face. The emphasis then is not on the repository of the scrolls, but, more reasonably, on the place where the scrolls are read. The two plans could be compared, roughly, to the difference between the proscenium theater and theater in the round. Parenthetically, the central bimah plan is perhaps the only distinctively Jewish contribution to architectural form.

Sanctity

There is no real difference between the sanctity of the parts of the synagogue structure. Our religion is horizontal; all is holy—the temple, the home, the mountain and the valley. So it is necessary to design the social parts, the educational parts and the worship hall as a unity, for all our activities shall be a hymn in His praise.

Ritual Appointments

In the usual synagogue there are two menorahs. These flank the ark and are electrically-lighted, decorative accessories. Above the ark, the ner tamid, another decorative accessory which, more often than not, with its red electric bulb resembles an exit sign.

Now both menorah and ner tamid are written of in Exodus for anyone to read. They were surely not intended as decoration, but as symbols full of meaning, not only in appearance, but in use. Consider the seven-branched menorah. Exodus calls for one such candlestick, and it was made of gold. Then why do the architects provide two? A candlestick should hold candles, not electric bulbs. This is simple functionalism and functionalism also requires that an object be used. It is our Jewish custom to light candles welcoming the Sabbath. Shall we not light them in the sanctuary as well as in the home?

The menorah becomes then a living element in the service. The Talmud forbids copying that which was in the Temple, so you will find in old examples of the menorah, eight, ten or even fourteen lights, since there were seven in the Temple. But, let us in this day make the seven-branched menorah, and, when it comes to the center candle, let it be unlit, a constant reminder to all of us that the Temple is not rebuilt, the day of redemption is not yet here, but we have hope. Have we not now the hope that it will be? If we have, then our menorah is ready for the great day and in the meantime is a symbol of our optimism and good cheer.

The ner tamid—what does it really mean? The rabbis said that it represented the light Israel casts on the world. Perhaps, I say, it recalls the hearth fire in the prehistoric cave. If that goes out, then death is near. For us I think of it as a symbol of guardianship. The light burns

but a little time and we know that the watchman watches since he must come to tend the lamp and, hanging as it does over the Torah cabinet, he has found the Torah safe and undisturbed. The ner tamid is an oil lamp and I ask my congregation to give its guardianship to the youth. The classes preparing for Bar Mitzvah take down the lamp once a week, clean the bowl and wick, and relight it with a little prayer.

Now just a word on why, especially at this time, every architect should lend his hand to God's work.

At this time, we of the human condition are in danger of annihilation. Our statesmen have turned out to be politicians, our scientists have invented a demon in a little bottle and don't know how to keep the cork in. To whom shall we turn for guidance? Does Isaiah not give the answer? "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Bid Jerusalem take heart and proclaim unto her that her time of service is accomplished, that her guilt is paid off that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Philip Johnson

The problem of designing the contemporary synagogue is a nearly impossible one. It would not be so if only the sanctuary were the problem. Religious space has always in history been the most exacting and pleasurable to build. The Parthenon and Chartres Cathedral, perhaps the greatest architectural temples of the West, are religious buildings. A Jewish temple is as great a problem. The difficulty comes from the habits of the High Holy Days, when the attendance, shall we say, swells.

Now a space is either great small or great large, but it can hardly act like an accordion and be great small and large. How to design a room that will be great both ways? Our solution at Port Chester was a great room, with a small screen divider, because it seemed to us that most of the congregation comes only on High Holy Days and we wanted the community to enjoy the temple.

Once this hurdle is crossed, the design of a synagogue is the finest problem in architecture, a space where awe and reverence are the prime considerations, an inspiring challenge to the artist. The shoulds and shouldn'ts of design from this point in are the architects' business. The temple as a problem, unlike many Christian churches, is open to talent. The Southern Baptist Church, for example, must have a Colonial steeple. The Jewish temple merely has to be beautiful. As simple as that.

Eric Mendelsohn, 1946

In this time of troubles, all religious denominations are aware that Divine Service on Sabbaths and Holy Days cannot suffice to base our total life on the great moral principles as consummated in every religious edifice; that a church or a temple must remain a mere symbol unless faith is supported by ever-present spiritual guidance and permanent education of the entire congregation.

That is why today's religious centers should comprise three units: the House of Worship—the House of God, the Assembly Hall for adult members—the House of the People, the School for the education and recreation of their children—the House of the Torah.

To shelter these three divisions, to bring their different functions into organic plan-relationship, to express this material and mental unification in his structure must be the final aim of the architect.

A task of great complexity which demands a bold approach—the courage of artistic vision and the ingenious employment of all facilities we have developed in other fields of human endeavor.

To build a temple for the maximum seating-capacity expected, for instance on the Day of Atonement (i.e., at least twice as large as needed for normal services), is inadvisable for many reasons: the Rabbi cannot be at his best in front of empty seats; the adult member of the congregation, after a hectic business week, cannot turn his mind toward a higher plane unless he is carried (at least visually) by the religious intensity of a full house—the palpable sign of collective devotion. His economic conscience has no sympathy for "state-rooms" (that formal Victorian relic) to be used for a few occasions only, quite contrary to the informal pioneer spirit that made this country what it is; the young generation, now fully aware of the bare facts of life, rightly abhors any pomposity as entirely out of date. Mere size will not for all times inspire their inner nature—the prime source of any vital act and thought. Liv-

ing within the imaginative vastness of our continent, they are used to and sufficiently excited by skyscrapers, jet planes, and the fourth dimension. To re-direct their minds, to make them aware of their human limitations, to educate them toward the age-of-man we are just entering, our temples must be built to human scale. As social-centers, concentrated and flexible as life should be when it runs as a working utility. Thus, our temples should apply contemporary building-constructions and architectural conceptions to make the House of God a part of the democratic community in which He dwells—His laws and teachings conceivable to a century enlightened through man's scientific insight into the working order of the Universe; should reject for their interiors the mystifying darkness of an illiterate time and should place their faith in the light of the day which its principles should rule—the House of God either an inspiring place for festive occasions lifting up the heart of man, or the animated gathering-place of a fellowship warming their thoughts and intentions at the fire of the Divine Word given forth from altar and pulpit right in their midst—a worthy and self-respecting community-center to which everybody is invited. This is the spiritual background from which our Rabbis and Congregation leaders should approach their building projects.

Moreover, as building funds are always too low and high building costs are here to stay—every war and especially the last war, with its tremendous waste and destructions, has decreased the value of our money—the congregation should demand of their architect, as a sheer economic necessity, to use materials and techniques appropriate to today's wage level and to give up architectural methods which were feasible at an hourly wage of times long past; to devise a plan where every room, every space will be used every day, i.e., to make, through room-combinations, his plan as flexible as possible in order to meet the many and varied needs of the congregation; to renounce superficial and costly decorations and to make his layout and structural system the principal expression of his technical and artistic ingenuity, exactly as the static structure of the Greek temple (even when in ruins) retains its magnificent scale and symbolic idea as the house of the gods of Greece, as the dynamic structure of the medieval cathedral (even when stripped of all its adornments) remains the shining evidence of its faith. . . .

For both were the genuine expression of the Divine Power from which the architect's inspiration sprang and, at the same time, the manifestation of the human power—the spirit of their new age from which his hand and vision received substance and support.

Yet, strangely enough, there is an irrational reluctance to grasp our own opportunity, to assume the challenging responsibility before us. We hesitate of boldness in designing our homes, public buildings and temples but defiantly—recklessly—probe the most secret workings of our material environment.

It has been said that religious structures must be “traditional” to impart a sense of the sacred, that the dignity and emotional significance of the building can only be expressed through an historic association. To admit this is to deny that religion is an important part of our—today's society. It is frequently said that contemporary design will not “harmonize.” Certainly, even the most beautifully conceived contemporary building will suffer if it is arbitrarily forced into a jungle of faked period pieces.

Therefore, it becomes doubly important to select a site which will do justice to the building and not defy its harmonious integration with its surroundings.

Today, we have reformed our liturgy and religious customs in order to free Judaism from the friction of outlived forms, and to make its vital functions conform with the life we have to live.

Moreover, the experience of the two world-wars, the profound changes brought forth by science and technique, will of necessity transfer the ideals upon which our country was built, into the orbit of our new age. An age where these ideals will prevail in principle but must be filled with new contents in order to avoid further conflagrations.

The matured generations among us may not be favored to see the full extent of this promised land, but the generations of our children will certainly breathe its buoyant air. For them we are planning and building new temples and they rightfully will condemn us when our plans are obsolete, when our buildings built for many generations to come, reflect the form-conceptions of a world that is not theirs.

If, however, the needs and limitations of the community are seriously appraised, the site carefully chosen, the geographic and climatic factors thoroughly evaluated, and contempo-

rary building methods boldly and surely employed, the result is bound to be stimulating and sincere—a visual proof that we Jews are full participants in this momentous period of America.

This period demands centers of worship where the spirit of the Bible is not an ancient mirage, but a living truth, where Jehovah is not a distant King, but our Guide and Companion. It demands temples that will bear witness of man's material achievements and, at the same time, symbolize our spiritual renaissance. A question no architect can pass upon, but the answer will inevitably be recorded in the pages of history now being written.

Barnett Newman

The impression that today's popular architecture creates is that it has no subject. It talks about itself as if it were only an object, a machine or an organic object; or one of new materials, new forms, new volumes, new spaces.

The subject of architecture is always taken for granted, that somehow it will supply itself or what is worse, that the client will supply it, that a building automatically becomes a work of art.

In the synagogue, the architect has the perfect subject because it gives him total freedom for a personal work of art. In the synagogue ceremony nothing happens that is objective. In it there is only the subjective experience in which one feels exalted. "Know before whom you stand," reads the command. But the concern seems to be not with the emotion of exaltation and personal identity called for by the command but with the number of seats and clean decor. We have broken out of the Alhambra. Is it only to fall into a new one? The synagogue is more than just a House of Prayer. It is a place, Makom, where each man can be called up to stand before the Torah to read his portion. In the Amsterdam synagogue tradition, man was put on a stage to become an actor and the women were put behind silk curtains. In the Prague synagogue, the women were even put behind walls. In the new synagogues, the women are there, sometimes even sitting with the men, but they are there as members of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Here in this synagogue, each man sits, private and secluded in the dugouts, waiting to be called, not to ascend a stage, but to go up on the mound where, under the tension of that "Tzim-Tzum" that created light and the world, he can experience a total sense of his own personality before the Torah and His Name.

The women are also there, as persons and not as wives and mothers. Here the women are out in the open, sitting not in any abstract connection with what takes place but as persons, distinct from their men, but in the full, clear light, where they can experience their identity as women of valor.

My purpose is to create a place, not an environment, to deny the contemplation of the objects of ritual for the sake of that ultimate courtesy where each person, man or woman, can experience the vision and feel the exaltation of "His trailing robes filling the Temple."

Herbert Oppenheimer

The synagogue is a house of God expressing a unity of several opposite but mutually sympathetic elements:

The individual who worships should have a personal relationship to the Torah and Rabbi but he should also have a meaningful relationship to his fellow worshippers and be aware that he is one of a group;

The synagogue must serve the several particular needs of the Jewish community. The spiritual, the social, and the educational requirements must each be satisfied in themselves, but they must be united in a single integrated religious expression;

That religious expression must be inspiring and spiritual and must raise people above the commonplace of the material world. But this same religious expression must exist within the material world and infuse this world with significance.

Werner Seligmann

... Within most program requirements is an inherent distinction in the relative importance of the constituent parts. The spatial and formal hierarchy of a synagogue program should be obvious. In most cases the secular functions occupy considerably more space than the primary function, the sanctuary. The architect is faced with the problem of how he should

organize the form in a way that would give the sanctuary its due importance. Hierarchy was quite clearly a problem. There was not enough room on the site to organize the whole axially with the sanctuary as the center, but it was possible to contrast the sanctuary to the other functions. Isolation is a powerful way to create hierarchical significance. This was all possible in the design of the Beth David Synagogue by moving the sanctuary to the roof top.

... By form, I do not refer to shape, but to the ideas organizing it, just as we talk of form in poetry or music. Form in this sense is a matter of the mind, it is a way in which knowledge is made manifest. Architecture speaks primarily through its form and, as LeCorbusier says, "It will strike a chord in us, when form has been sparked by poetic emotion. Passion creates drama out of inert stone." At this moment the material aspects disappear and the true content of architecture reveals itself. This is where the true issues of any piece of architecture lie. Architecture is more than a mere agglomeration of spaces. The issues of synagogue architecture are issues of all architecture, issues of form. What generates form? Form precedent, thus the knowledge cultivated through study and analysis, and the understanding of the structure of ideas, and of one idea upon another. Beyond form lies the question of style. Style in this context can be explained as characteristic systems by which architecture is woven consistently along the guide lines dictated by form, and the success of a work of architecture may well be in how the system fits the form.

Sherwood, Mills and Smith

A synagogue is primarily a house for the worship of God, and its architecture must reinforce rather than detract from religious experience. The building is intended to symbolize a monotheistic religious concept, a oneness expressed by the simple single form of the structure. An effort has been made to provide qualities of aspiration in the design more than is expected in secular buildings. The architects have made a humble resolution in designing the structure to put themselves in the background in a determination to avoid all that is false, all that is merely decorative, and all that hints of architectural exhibitionism, personal design virtuosity or lavish display. Instead, the guideposts for the design of this synagogue have been simplicity of concept and expression, honesty of structure, dignity in the selection and use of materials and restraint in color and lighting.

But the synagogue is not only a house of worship—it serves also as an important community social center for its congregation. The interior of the building must, therefore, contribute an atmosphere of congeniality, warmth and well-being, as well as practical solutions to such requirements as suitable acoustics, comfortable heat and ventilation, efficient facilities for the preparation and service of food and flexible provision for many different functions and activities. In designing the synagogue, lounge and social hall as three spaces which on occasion must be combined to form a single large space, great effort has been made to obtain unity, beauty and pleasing proportions, whether or not these spaces are separated or combined.

As to the exterior, the synagogue is in a residential community; therefore, an attempt has been made to avoid ponderous monumentality and to achieve a character which harmonizes with its residential environment.

Frank Lloyd Wright

We want to build an American Synagogue for Jews to worship in.

We want to create the kind of a building that people, on entering it, will feel as if they were resting in the very hands of God.

... At last a great symbol! Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen gave me the idea of a synagogue as a "traveling Mt. Sinai"—a "mountain of light."

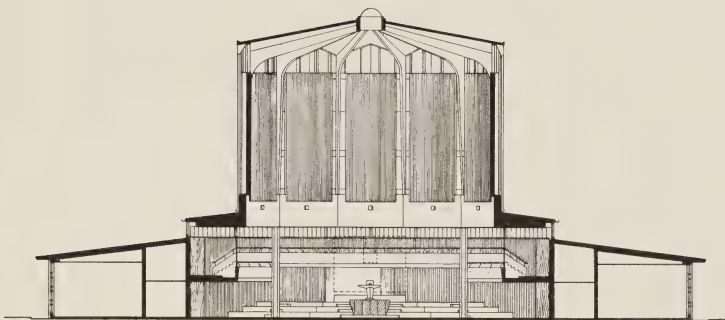
Minoru Yamasaki

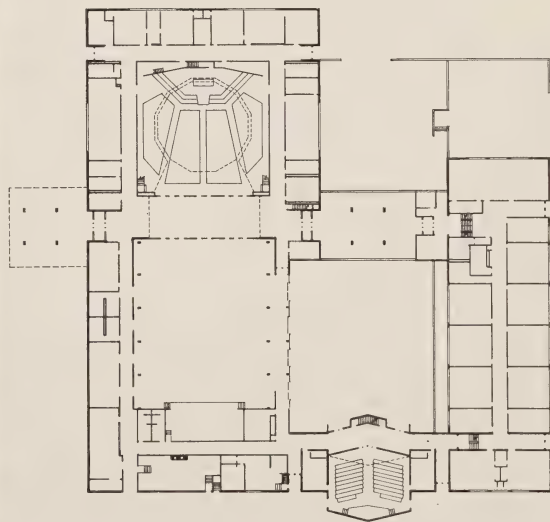
Judaism appears to offer a beautiful combination of tradition, thought and equality. The old Gothic cathedrals put men in awe of the Lord. These churches were depressing in their grandeur. Judaism seems to place man and God side by side.

In order to believe in God, man must first believe in himself. He cannot do this unless he is given dignity by his surroundings; he shouldn't be made to feel like dust before his God.

Judaism is a religion of light—not of mysticism and darkness. ... Judaism has little pomp and pageantry ... it elevates all men—regardless of wealth and stature—to equals in the synagogue. Hence, the architecture of this House of Worship must blend all of these principles.

Temple Brith Kodesh
Rochester, New York
Architect: Pietro Belluschi



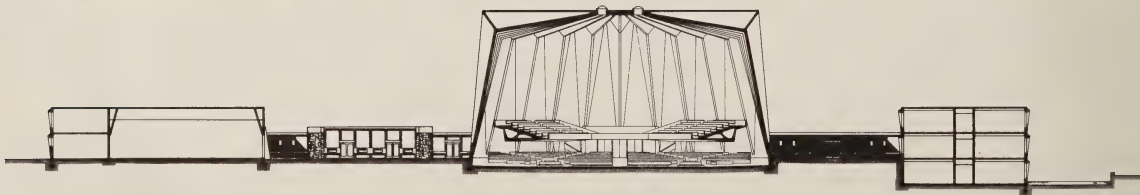
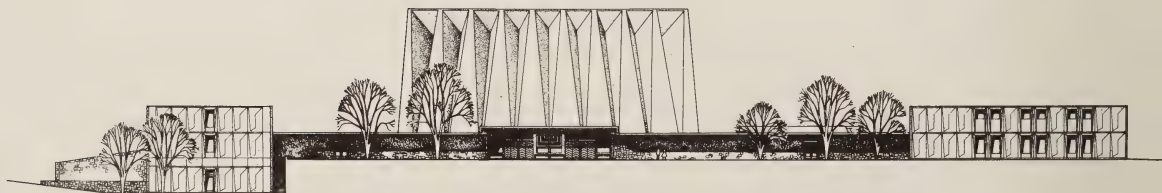
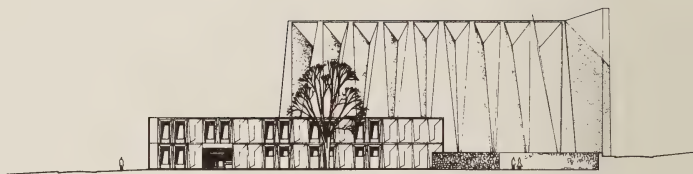
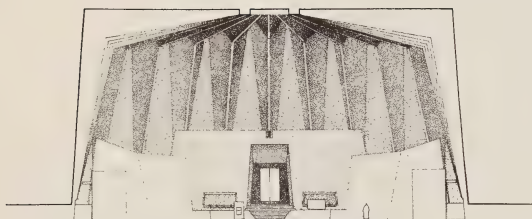
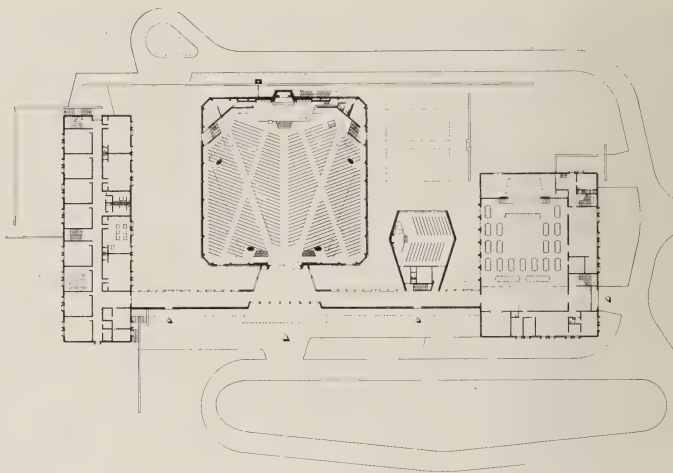


Temple Emanu-El of West Essex
Livingston, New Jersey
Architects: Peter Blake and Julian Neski



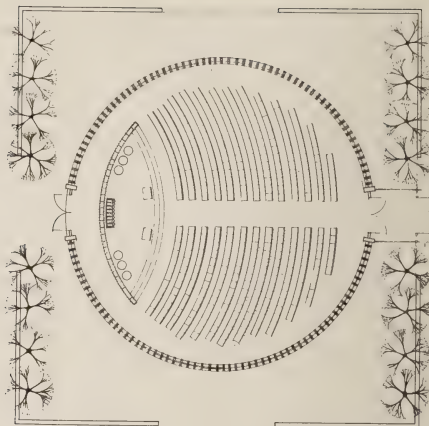


Temple B'nai Jeshurun
Short Hills, New Jersey
Architect: Marcel Breuer

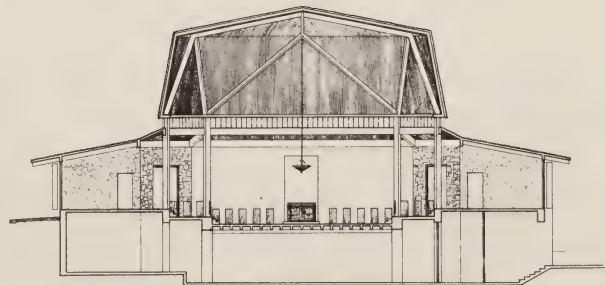
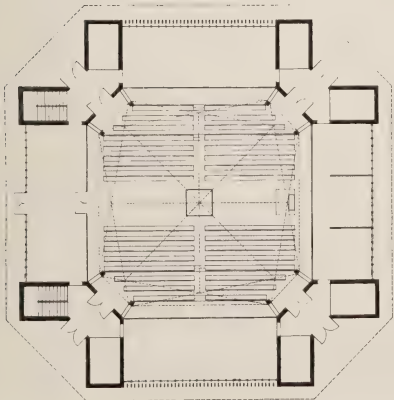




Temple Emanu-El
East Meadow, New York
Architects: Davis, Brody & Wisniewski

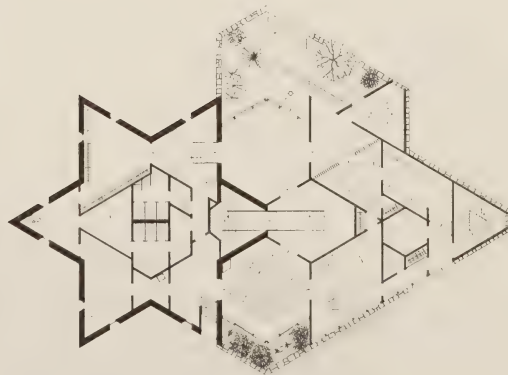
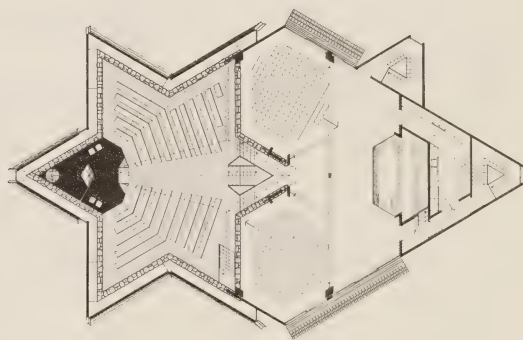


Congregation Sons of Israel
Lakewood, New Jersey
Architects: Davis, Brody & Wisniewski

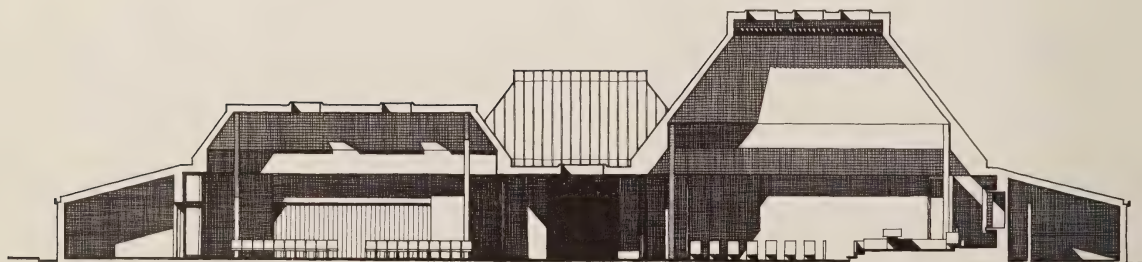
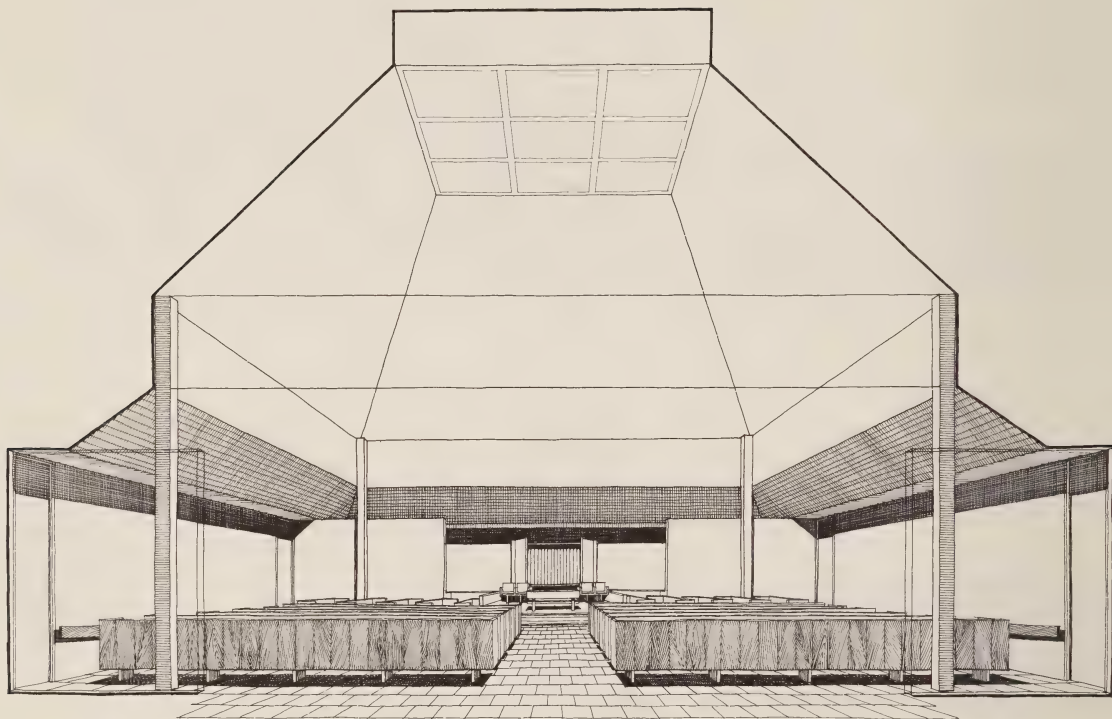


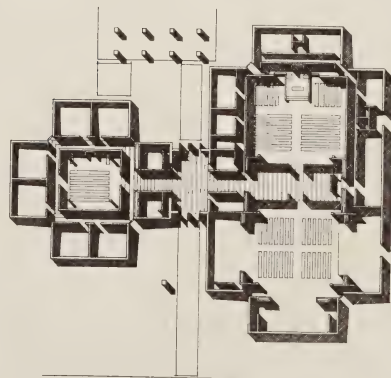
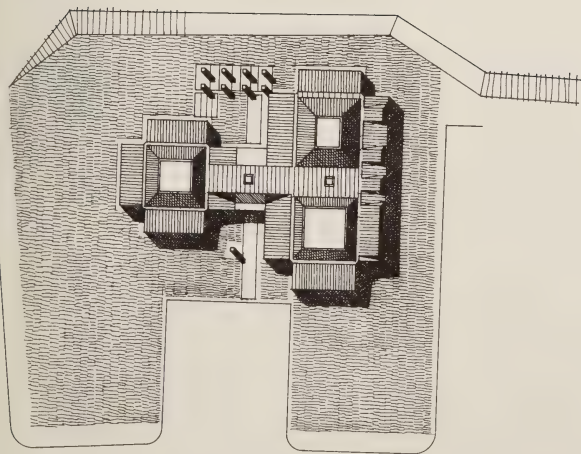
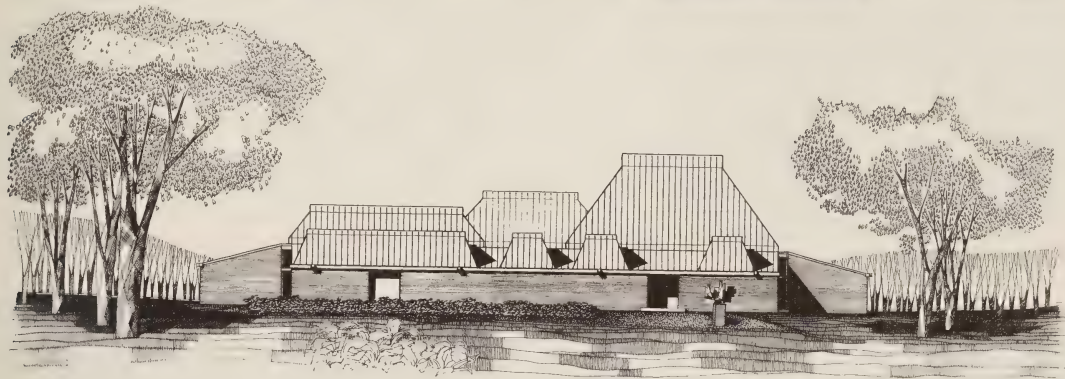
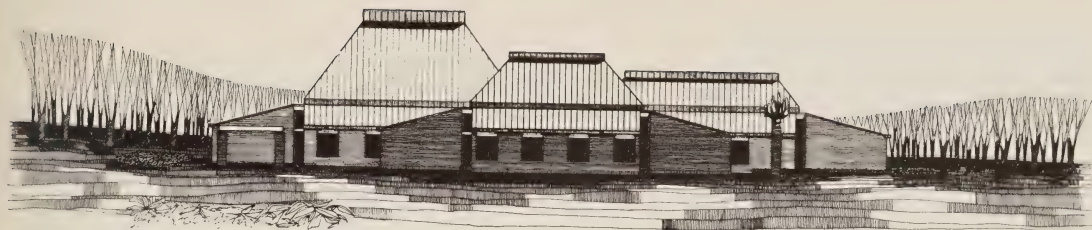
Sinai Reform Temple
Bay Shore, New York
Architects: Harold Edelman & Stanley Salzman



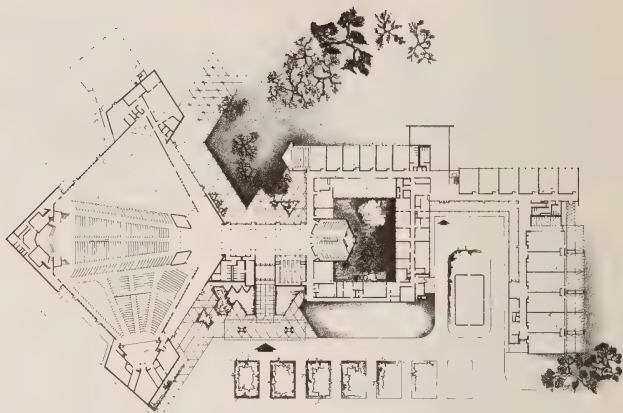


Temple Beth Sholom
Manchester, Connecticut
Architects: Geddes, Brecher, Qualls and Cunningham



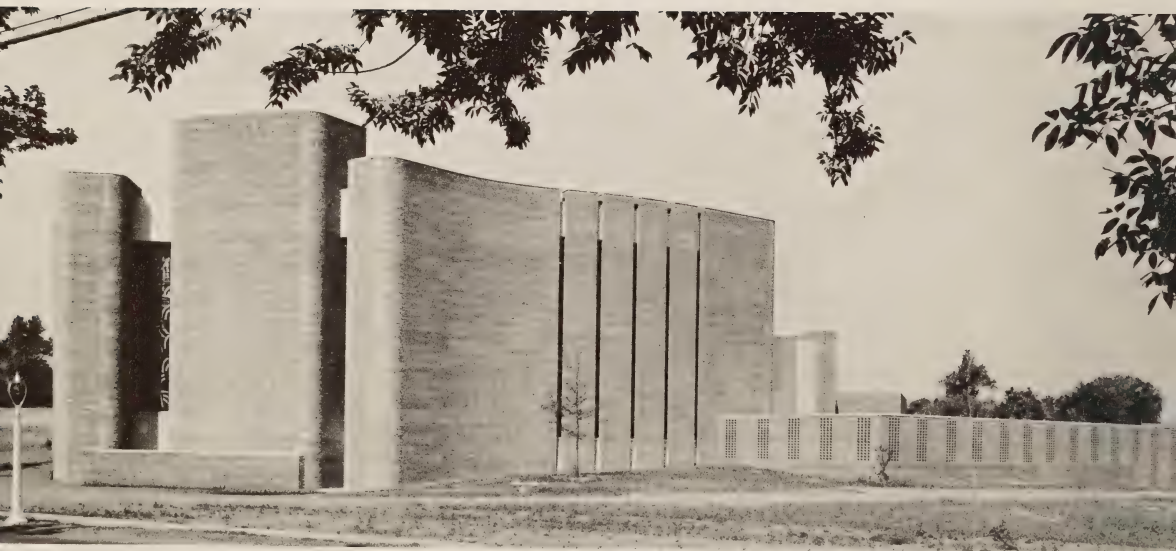
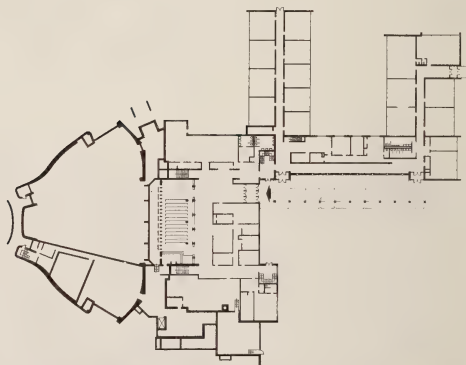
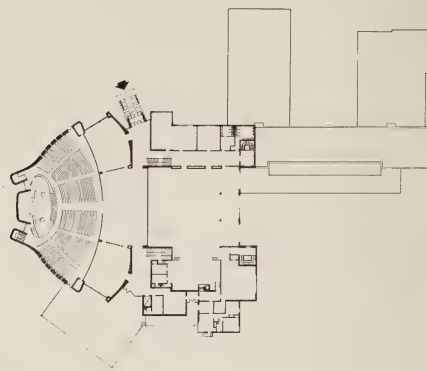


Congregation Shaarey Zedek
Southfield, Michigan
Architects: Albert Kahn
Percival Goodman



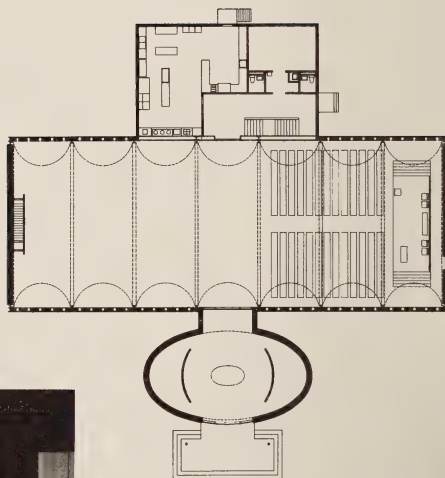
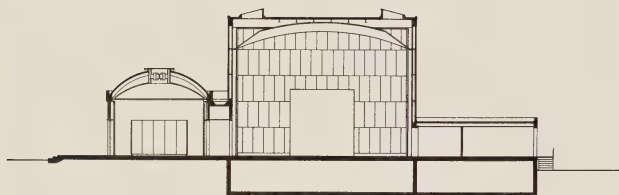


Congregation Beth El
Rochester, New York
Architects: Percival Goodman
Todd and Giroux



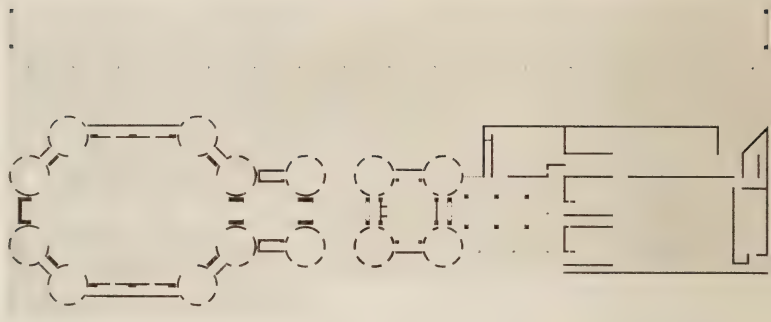


Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue
Port Chester, New York
Architect: Philip Johnson





Mikveh Israel Synagogue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Architect: Louis I. Kahn

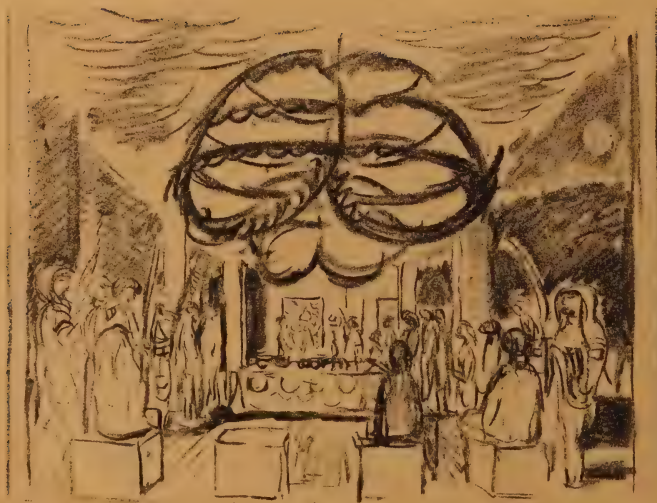




Interior of Synagogue



Chapel



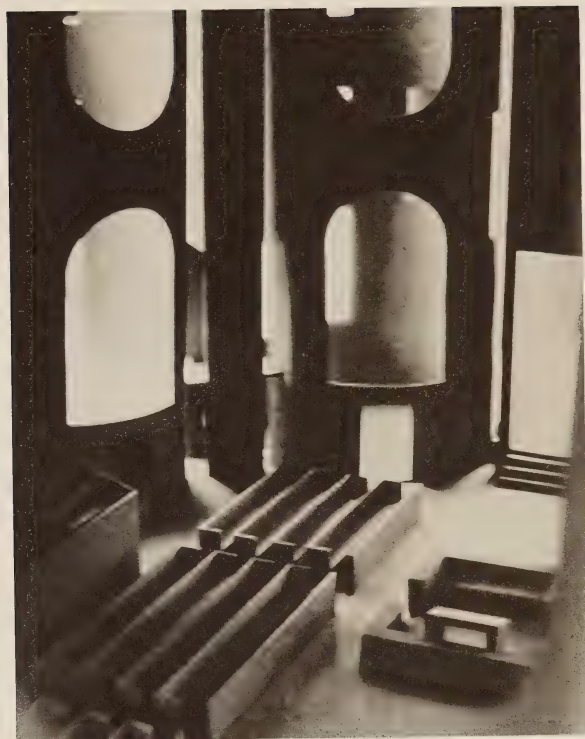
Succah



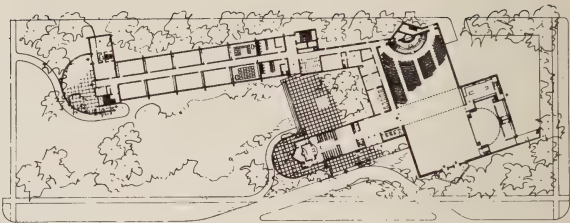
Entrance court

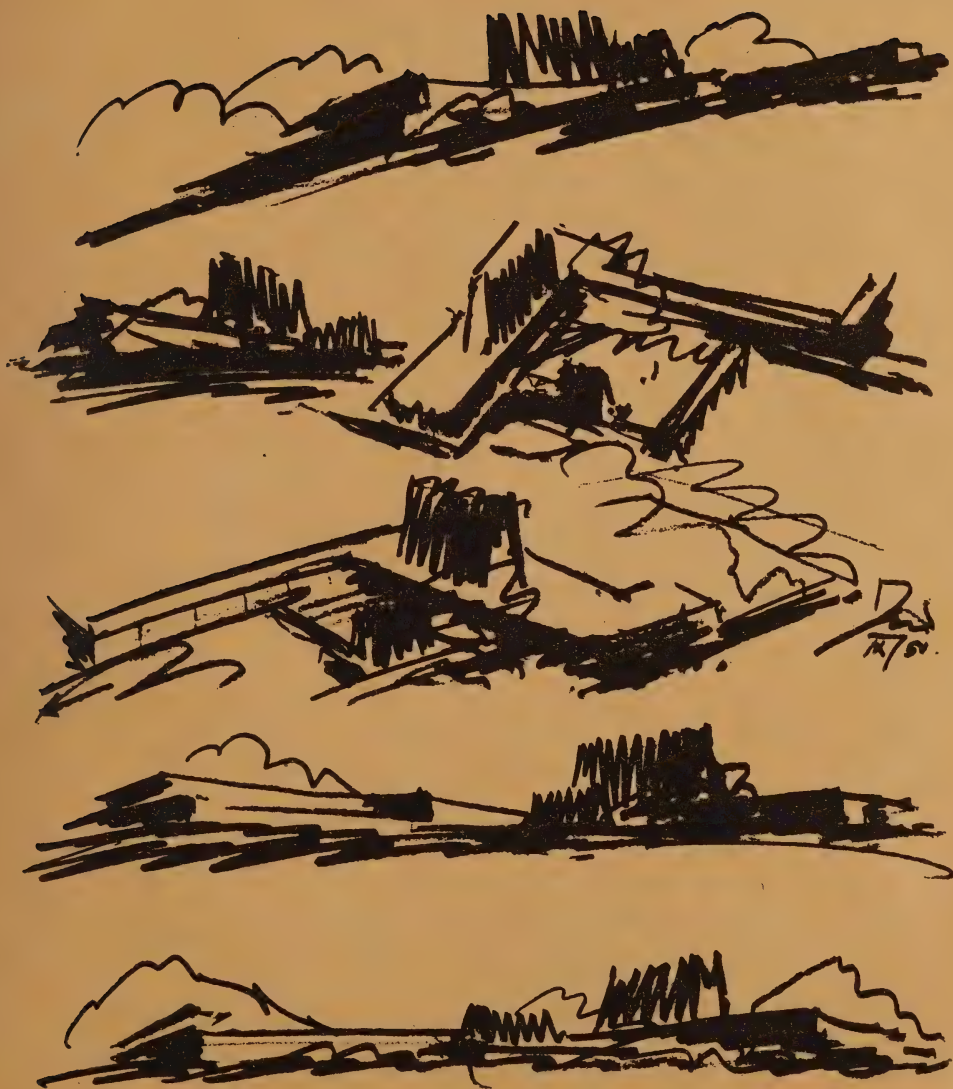


Interior of Synagogue

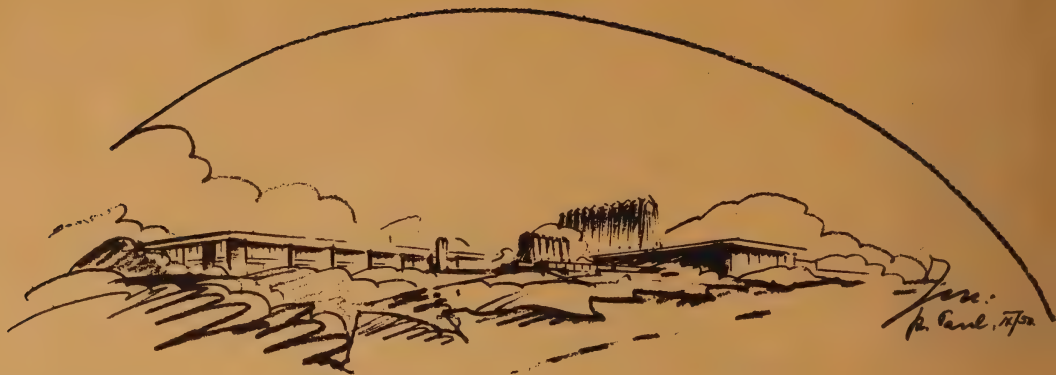


Mount Zion Temple and Community Center
St. Paul, Minnesota
Architect: Eric Mendelsohn





Mount Zion Temple and Community Center, St. Paul, Minnesota



Mount Zion Temple and Community Center, St. Paul, Minnesota



Temple B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, Missouri



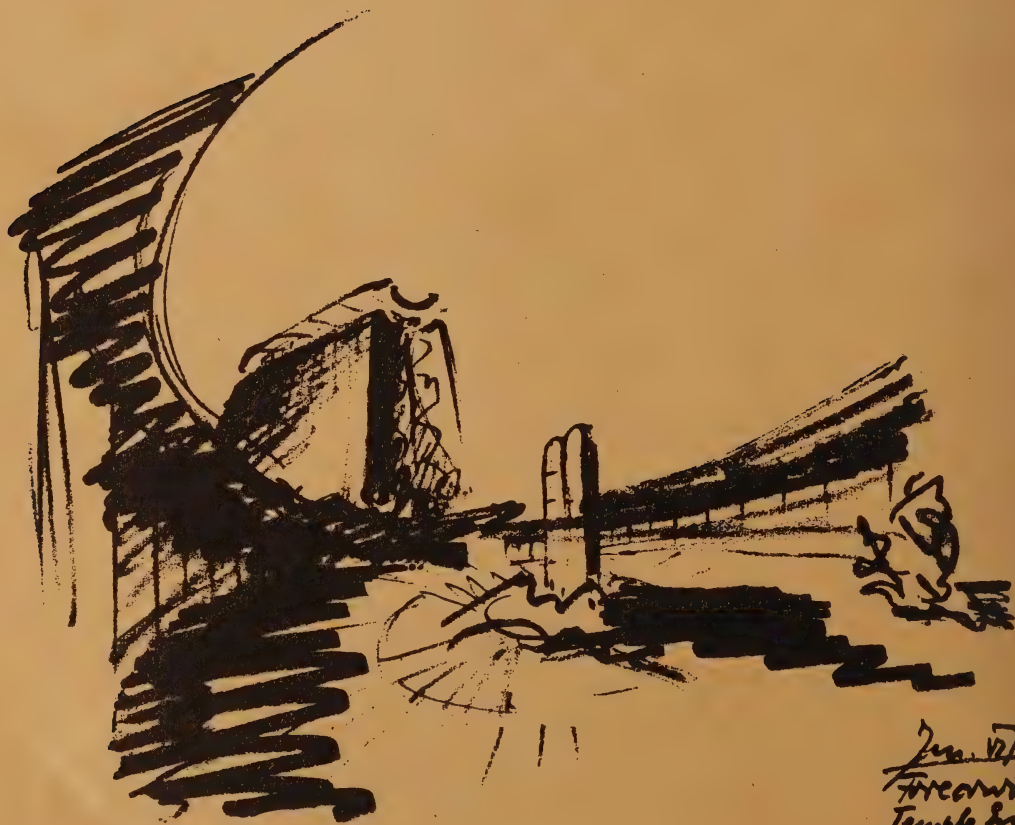
Project for a Synagogue



Project for a Synagogue



Temple Beth El, Baltimore, Maryland



Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas

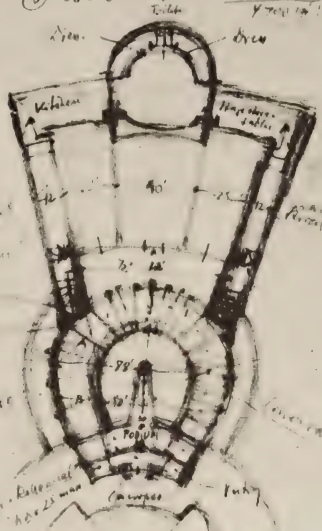
Jan. 12/57
Forecourt
Temple Emanuel
Dallas, Tex

67

Foyer $22 \times 72 = 1584$ sq. ft. 200 seats

7/11. 57.
meal

Temple (A) $\frac{7^2 \pi}{4} = 38.48 = 5777$ sq. ft. $= 2520$ sq. ft.
(B) $30 \times 20 = 1200$ sq. ft. $= 2200$ sq. ft.



Theatre
Concerts

Religious
Service

7/11. 57.

Under 1/2 hour
20 min
5 min
Side 27.65 - 17.00
2.700 = 25.00
Total amount
94 x 65 = 6110

HOUSE OF CONGREGATION

congregation - other rooms for a
function

HOUSE OF PRAYER

Interior as no
outside
could be kept
as back of centre
development

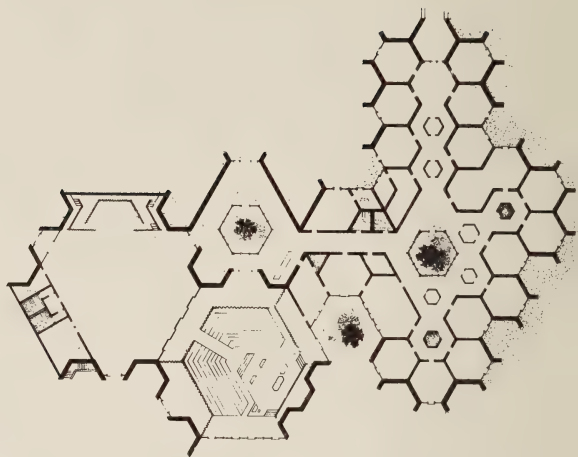
65 ft. wide
100 ft. long

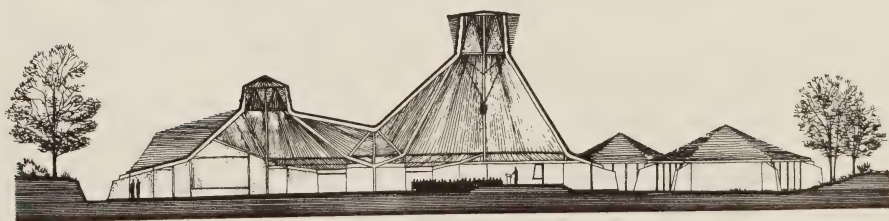
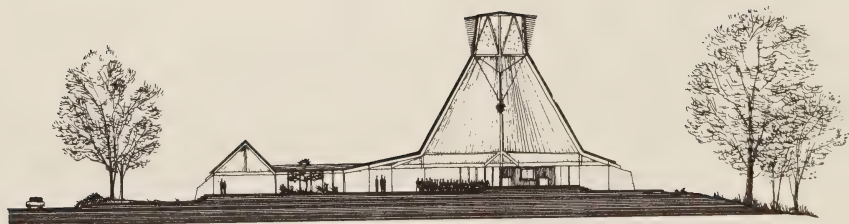
65 ft. wide
100 ft. long

65 ft. wide
100 ft. long

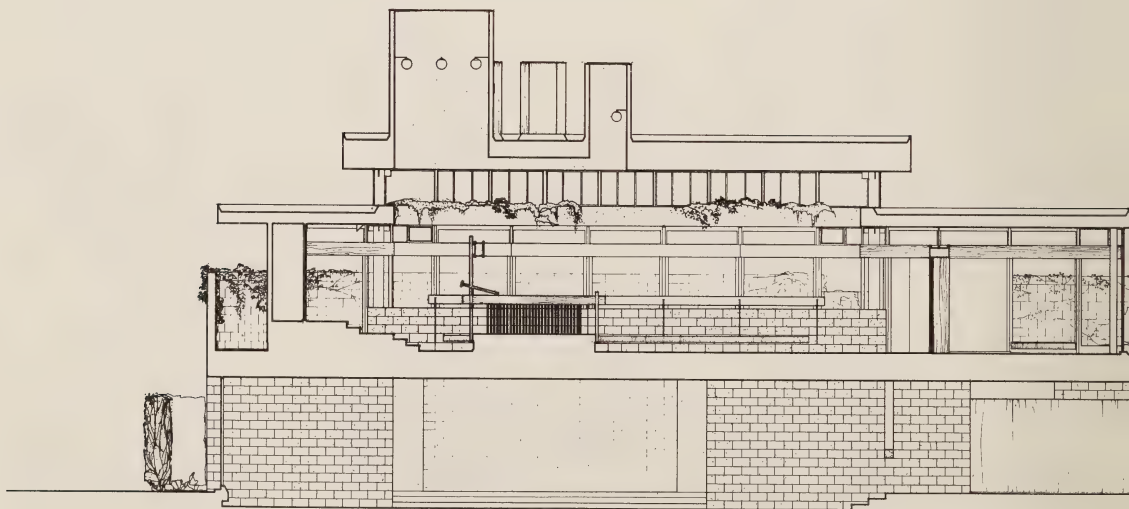
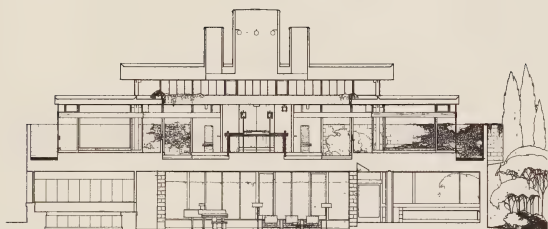
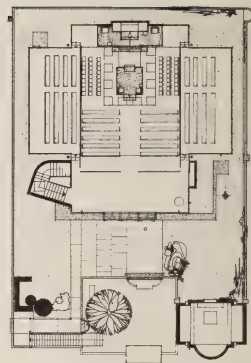
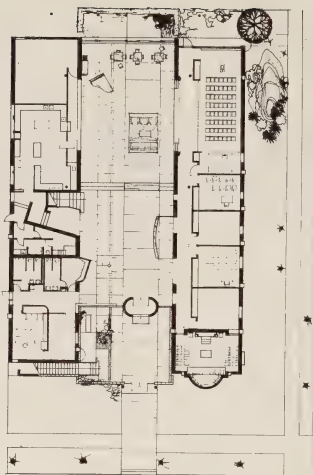


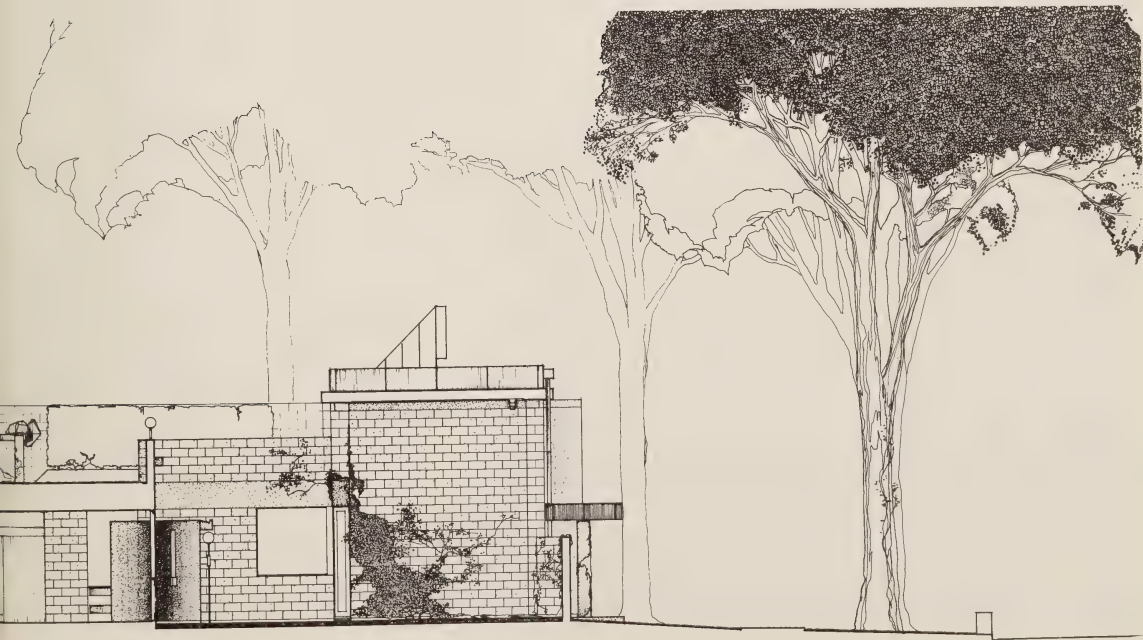
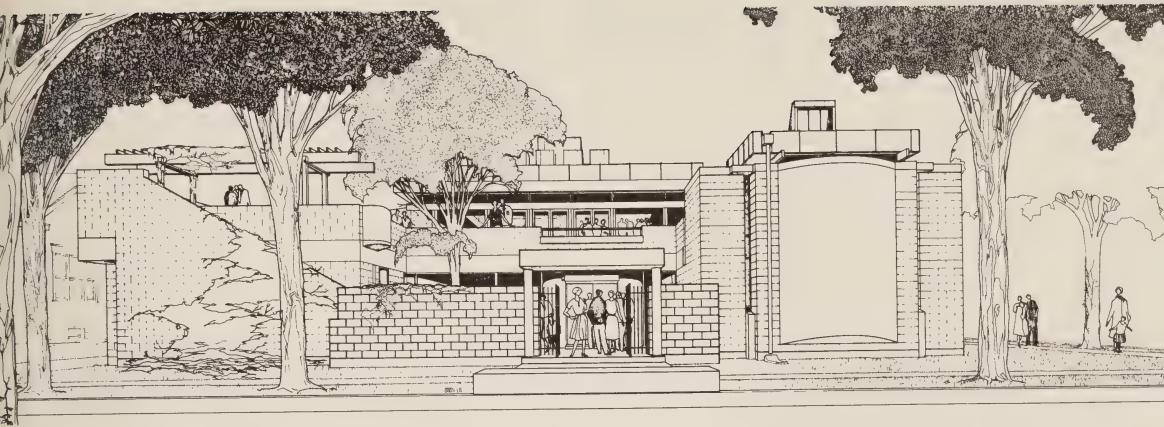
Temple Shalom
Norwalk, Connecticut
Architects: Oppenheimer, Brady and Lehrecke



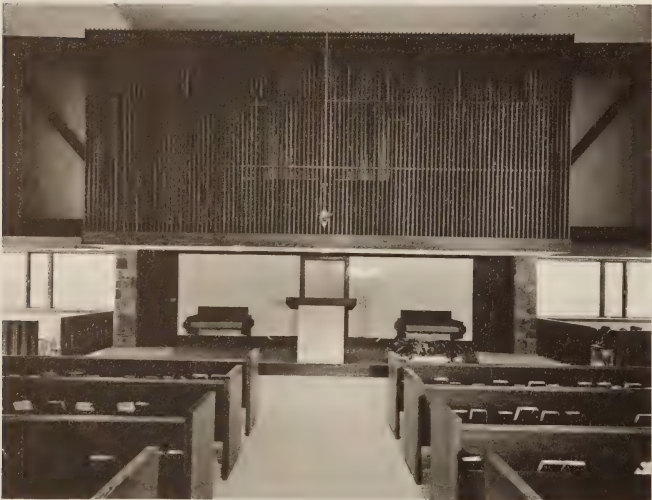
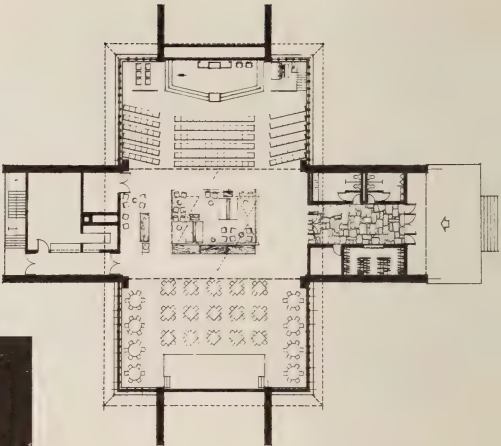


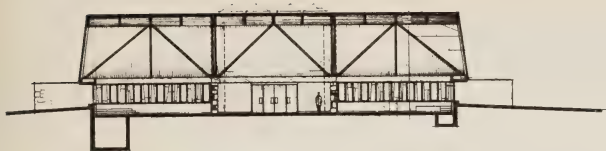
Beth David Synagogue
Binghamton, New York
Architect: Werner Seligmann





Temple Sinai
Stamford, Connecticut
Architects: Sherwood, Mills and Smith

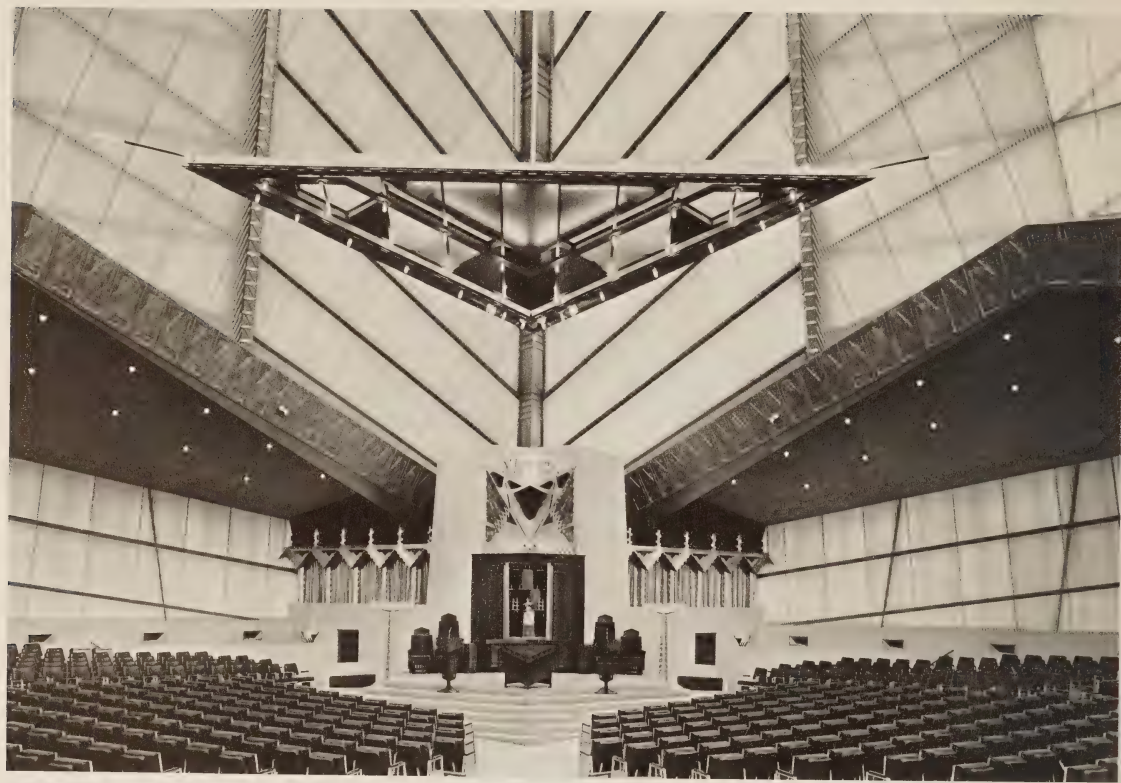


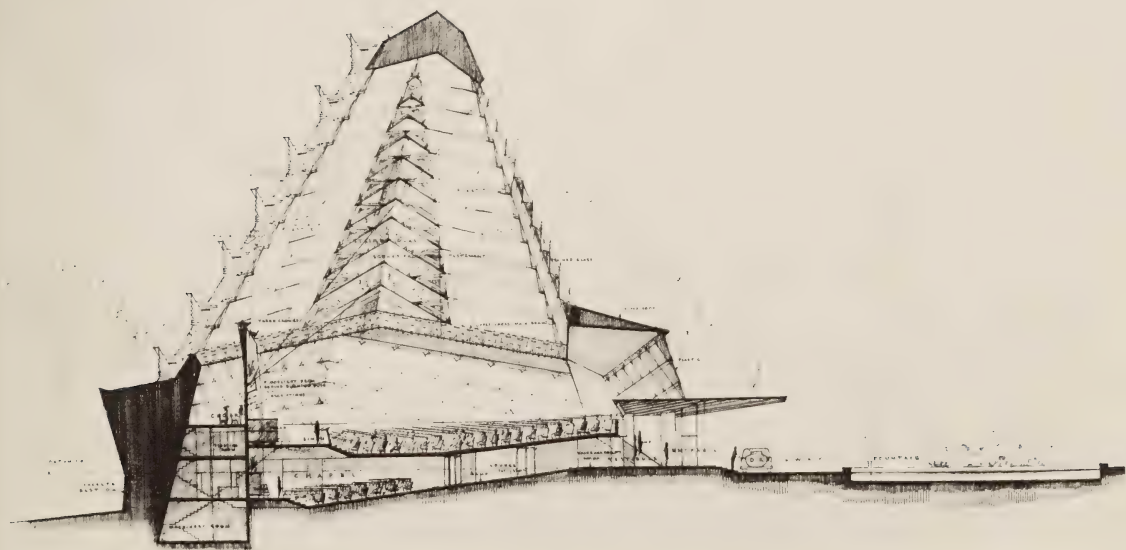
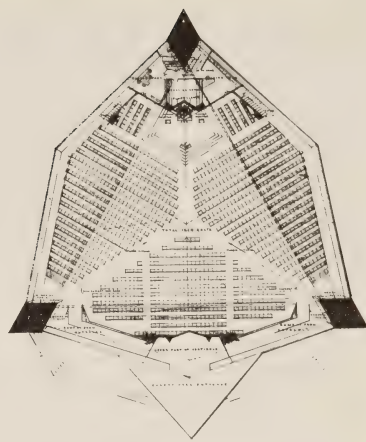
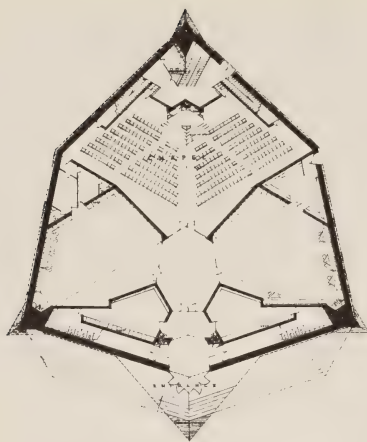


Beth Shalom Congregation
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania
Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

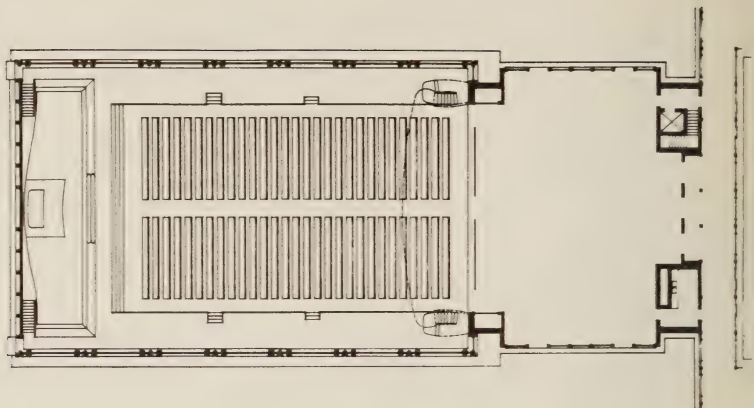


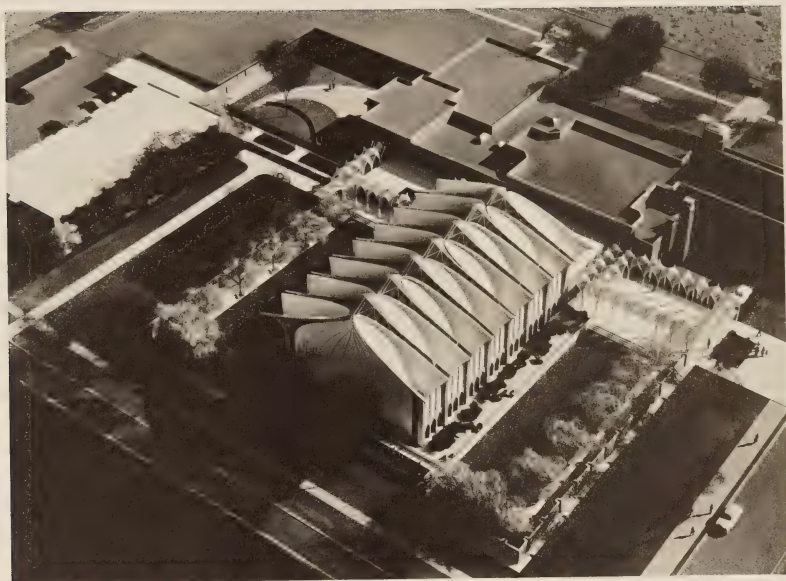




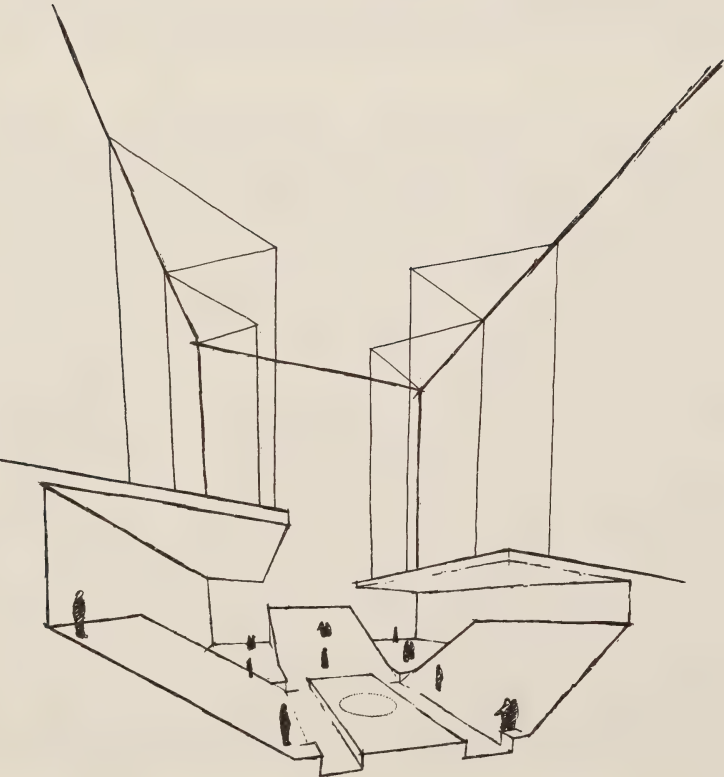
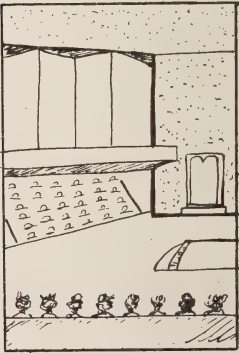
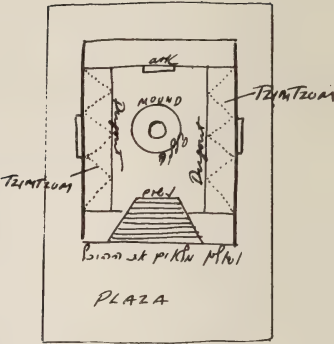


North Shore Congregation Israel
Glencoe, Illinois
Architect: Minoru Yamasaki





Project for a Synagogue
Artist: Barnett Newman



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[illegible]

Paul L. Gordon: Congregation Beth El
P. E. Guerrero: Beth Shalom Congregation
David Hirsh: Temple Emanu-El, East Meadow
Baltazar Korab: Congregation Shaarey Zedek
Joseph Molitor: Temple Brith Kodesh
Louis Reens: Temple Sinai
Hans J. Schiller: Mount Zion Temple
Ben Schnall: Temple B'nai Jeshurun
Ezra Stoller: Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue

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